09/869513

16

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

REC'D 27 JUL 2001
WIPO PCT

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 991963	FOR FURTHER ACTION	See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)
International application No. PCT/US99/31285	International filing date *(day/month/year)* 30 DECEMBER 1999	Priority date *(day/month/year)* 30 DECEMBER 1998
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC IPC(7): G06F 15/00, 15/16 and US Cl.: 709/203, 204, 205		
Applicant FRANKE, PAUL D.		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 13 sheets.

   ☐ This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e., sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority. (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

   These annexes consist of a total of 0 sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

   I ☒ Basis of the report

   II ☐ Priority

   III ☐ Non-establishment of report with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability

   IV ☐ Lack of unity of invention

   V ☒ Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

   VI ☐ Certain documents cited

   VII ☐ Certain defects in the international application

   VIII ☐ Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 25 JULY 2000	Date of completion of this report 18 DECEMBER 2000
Name and mailing address of the IPEA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Authorized officer MARK RINEHART Telephone No. 703-305-9600

Form PCT/IPEA/409 (cover sheet) (July 1998) *

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US99/31285

I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application: *

☐ the international application as originally filed

☒ the description:
pages 1-47 , as originally filed
pages NONE , filed with the demand
pages NONE , filed with the letter of _____

☒ the claims:
pages 48-54 , as originally filed
pages NONE , as amended (together with any statement) under Article 19
pages NONE , filed with the demand
pages NONE , filed with the letter of _____

☒ the drawings:
pages 1-14 , as originally filed
pages NONE , filed with the demand
pages NONE , filed with the letter of _____

☒ the sequence listing part of the description:
pages NONE , as originally filed
pages NONE , filed with the demand
pages NONE , filed with the letter of _____

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.
These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language _____ which is:

☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).

☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).

☐ the language of the translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rules 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

☐ contained in the international application in printed form.

☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.

☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.

☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.

☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.

☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the writen sequence listing has been furnished.

4. ☒ The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

☒ the description, pages NONE

☒ the claims, Nos. NONE

☒ the drawings, sheets/~~fig~~ NONE

5. ☐ This report has been drawn as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed, as indicated in the Supplemental Box (Rule 70.2(c)).**

** Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17).*

***Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.*

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. statement

Novelty (N)	Claims	1-42	YES
	Claims	NONE	NO
Inventive Step (IS)	Claims	1-42	YES
	Claims	NONE	NO
Industrial Applicability (IA)	Claims	1-42	YES
	Claims	NONE	NO

2. citations and explanations (Rule 70.7)

Claims 1-42 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(2), because the prior art does not teach or fairly suggest the receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions.

Claims 1-42 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(3), because the no combination of prior art does not teach or fairly suggest at the central website receiving from the client a selection for convention content information and at the central website releasing the selected convention content information to the client.

Claims 1-42 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(4), because the ability to exchange information between the planner client and the attendee client has a use in the networking industry.

---------- NEW CITATIONS ----------

NONE

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

PCT

NOTIFICATION CONCERNING
AMENDMENTS OF THE CLAIMS

(PCT Rule 62 and
Administrative Instructions, Section 417)

To:

Commissioner
US Department of Commerce
United States Patent and Trademark
Office, PCT
2011 South Clark Place Room
CP2/5C24
Arlington, VA 22202
ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

in its capacity as International Preliminary Examining Authority

Date of mailing (day/month/year)	
22 November 2000 (22.11.00)	
International application No.	International filing date (day/month/year)
PCT/US99/31285	30 December 1999 (30.12.99)
Applicant	
FRANKE, Paul, D.	

The International Bureau hereby informs the International Preliminary Examining Authority that no amendments under Article 19 have been received by the International Bureau (Administrative Instructions, Section 417).

The International Bureau of WIPO
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Facsimile No. (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer

R. Forax

Telephone No. (41-22) 338.83.38

PA. _NT COOPERATION TREAT

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF THE RECORDING OF A CHANGE

(PCT Rule 92bis.1 and Administrative Instructions, Section 422)

To:

ORKIN, Russell, D.
Webb Ziesenheim Logsdon Orkin & Hanson, P.C.
700 Koppers Building
436 Seventh Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1818
ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

Date of mailing (day/month/year)
23 January 2001 (23.01.01)

Applicant's or agent's file reference
991963

IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION

International application No.
PCT/US99/31285

International filing date (day/month/year)
30 December 1999 (30.12.99)

1. The following indications appeared on record concerning:

[X] the applicant [X] the inventor [ ] the agent [ ] the common representative

Name and Address
FRANKE, Paul, D.
2313 Cramden Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15241
United States of America

State of Nationality: US
State of Residence: US
Telephone No.:
Facsimile No.:
Teleprinter No.:

2. The International Bureau hereby notifies the applicant that the following change has been recorded concerning:

[ ] the person [ ] the name [X] the address [ ] the nationality [ ] the residence

Name and Address
FRANKE, Paul, D.
106 Springbrooke Drive
Venetia, PA 15367
United States of America

State of Nationality: US
State of Residence: US
Telephone No.:
Facsimile No.:
Teleprinter No.:

3. Further observations, if necessary:

4. A copy of this notification has been sent to:

[X] the receiving Office
[ ] the International Searching Authority
[X] the International Preliminary Examining Authority
[ ] the designated Offices concerned
[X] the elected Offices concerned
[ ] other:

The International Bureau of WIPO
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer
Ellen Moyse
Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION

(PCT Rule 61.2)

To:

Commissioner
US Department of Commerce
United States Patent and Trademark Office, PCT
2011 South Clark Place Room CP2/5C24
Arlington, VA 22202
ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing (day/month/year) 22 November 2000 (22.11.00)	
International application No. PCT/US99/31285	Applicant's or agent's file reference 991963
International filing date (day/month/year) 30 December 1999 (30.12.99)	Priority date (day/month/year) 30 December 1998 (30.12.98)
Applicant FRANKE, Paul, D.	

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:

[X] in the demand filed with the International Preliminary Examining Authority on:

25 July 2000 (25.07.00)

[ ] in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:

2. The election [X] was

[ ] was not

made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

The International Bureau of WIPO
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer

R. Forax

Telephone No.: (41-22) 338 83 38

REPLACED BY ART 34 AMDT

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

REC'D 20 MAR 2001

WIPO PCT

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 991963	**FOR FURTHER ACTION**	See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)
International application No. PCT/US99/31285	International filing date *(day/month/year)* 30 DECEMBER 1999	Priority date *(day/month/year)* 30 DECEMBER 1998
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC IPC(7): G06F 15/00, 15/16 and US Cl.: 709/203, 204, 205		
Applicant FRANKE, PAUL D.		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 3 sheets.

   [✓] This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e., sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority. (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

   These annexes consist of a total of 14 sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

   I [X] Basis of the report

   II [ ] Priority

   III [ ] Non-establishment of report with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability

   IV [ ] Lack of unity of invention

   V [X] Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

   VI [ ] Certain documents cited

   VII [ ] Certain defects in the international application

   VIII [ ] Certain observations on the international application

CORRECTED VERSION

Date of submission of the demand 25 JULY 2000	Date of completion of this report 18 DECEMBER 2000
Name and mailing address of the IPEA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Authorized officer MARK RINEHART Telephone No. 703-305-9600

Form PCT/IPEA/409 (cover sheet) (July 1998)*

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US99/31285

I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the elements of the international application:*

☐ the international application as originally filed

☒ the description:
pages 1-47 , as originally filed
pages NONE , filed with the demand
pages NONE , filed with the letter of _____

☒ the claims:
pages 48-54 , as originally filed
pages NONE , as amended (together with any statement) under Article 19
pages NONE , filed with the demand
pages NONE , filed with the letter of _____

☒ the drawings:
pages NONE , as originally filed
pages 1-14 , filed with the demand
pages NONE , filed with the letter of _____

☒ the sequence listing part of the description:
pages NONE , as originally filed
pages NONE , filed with the demand
pages NONE , filed with the letter of _____

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.
These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language _____ which is:

☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).

☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).

☐ the language of the translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rules 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

☐ contained in the international application in printed form.

☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.

☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.

☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.

☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.

☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the writen sequence listing has been furnished.

4. ☒ The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

☒ the description, pages NONE

☒ the claims, Nos. NONE

☒ the drawings, sheets/~~fig~~ NONE

5. ☐ This report has been drawn as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed, as indicated in the Supplemental Box (Rule 70.2(c)).**

** Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17).*

*** Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.*

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US99/31285

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. statement

Novelty (N)	Claims	1-42	YES
	Claims	NONE	NO
Inventive Step (IS)	Claims	1-42	YES
	Claims	NONE	NO
Industrial Applicability (IA)	Claims	1-42	YES
	Claims	NONE	NO

2. citations and explanations (Rule 70.7)

Claims 1-42 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(2), because the prior art does not teach or fairly suggest the receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions.

Claims 1-42 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(3), because the no combination of prior art does not teach or fairly suggest at the central website receiving from the client a selection for convention content information and at the central website releasing the selected convention content information to the client.

Claims 1-42 meet the criteria set out in PCT Article 33(4), because the ability to exchange information between the planner client and the attendee client has a use in the networking industry.

---------- NEW CITATIONS ----------

NONE

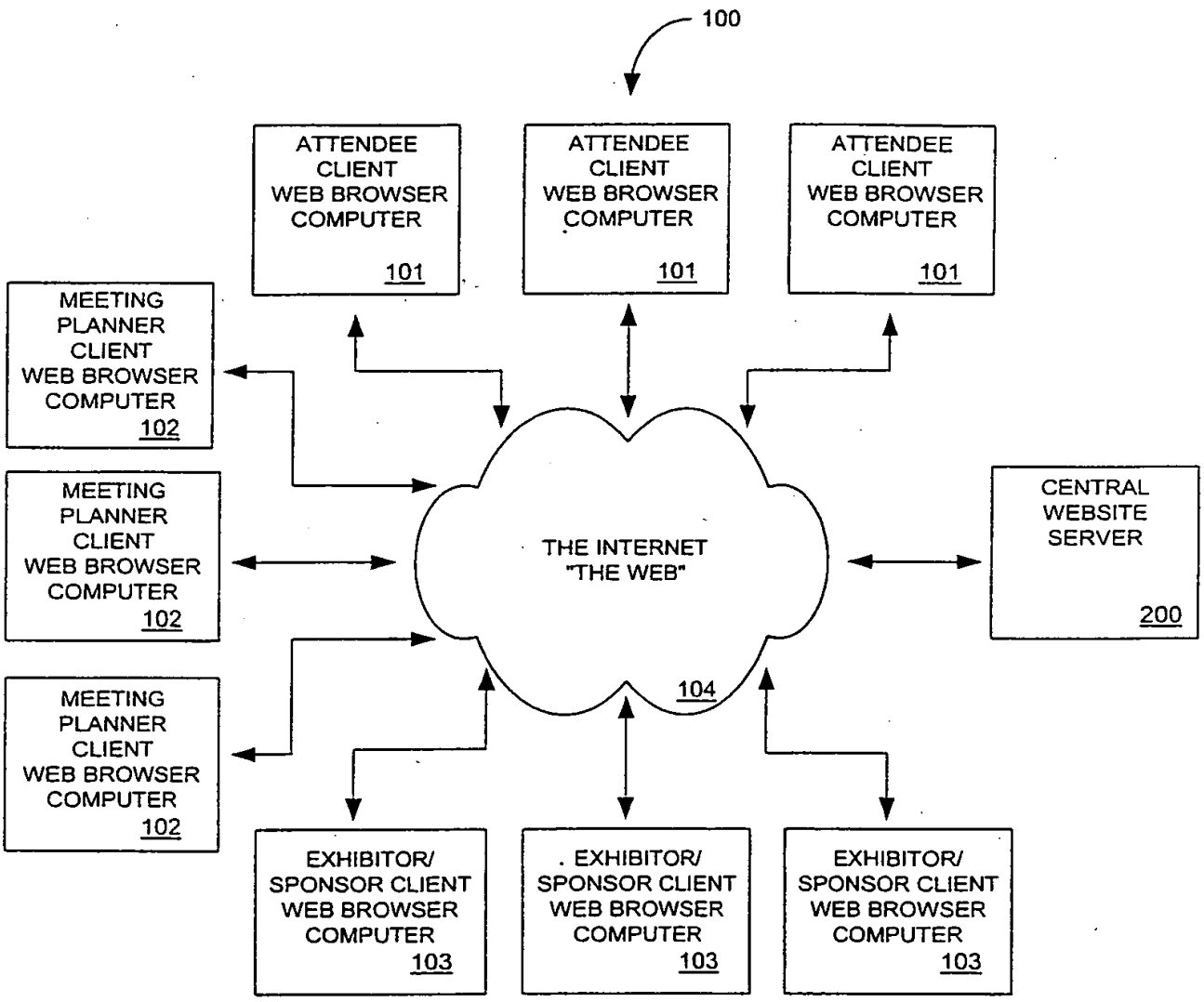

100
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 101
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 101
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 101
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 102
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 102
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 102
THE INTERNET "THE WEB"
104
CENTRAL WEBSITE SERVER 200
EXHIBITOR/ SPONSOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 103
EXHIBITOR/ SPONSOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 103
EXHIBITOR/ SPONSOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 103

FIGURE 1

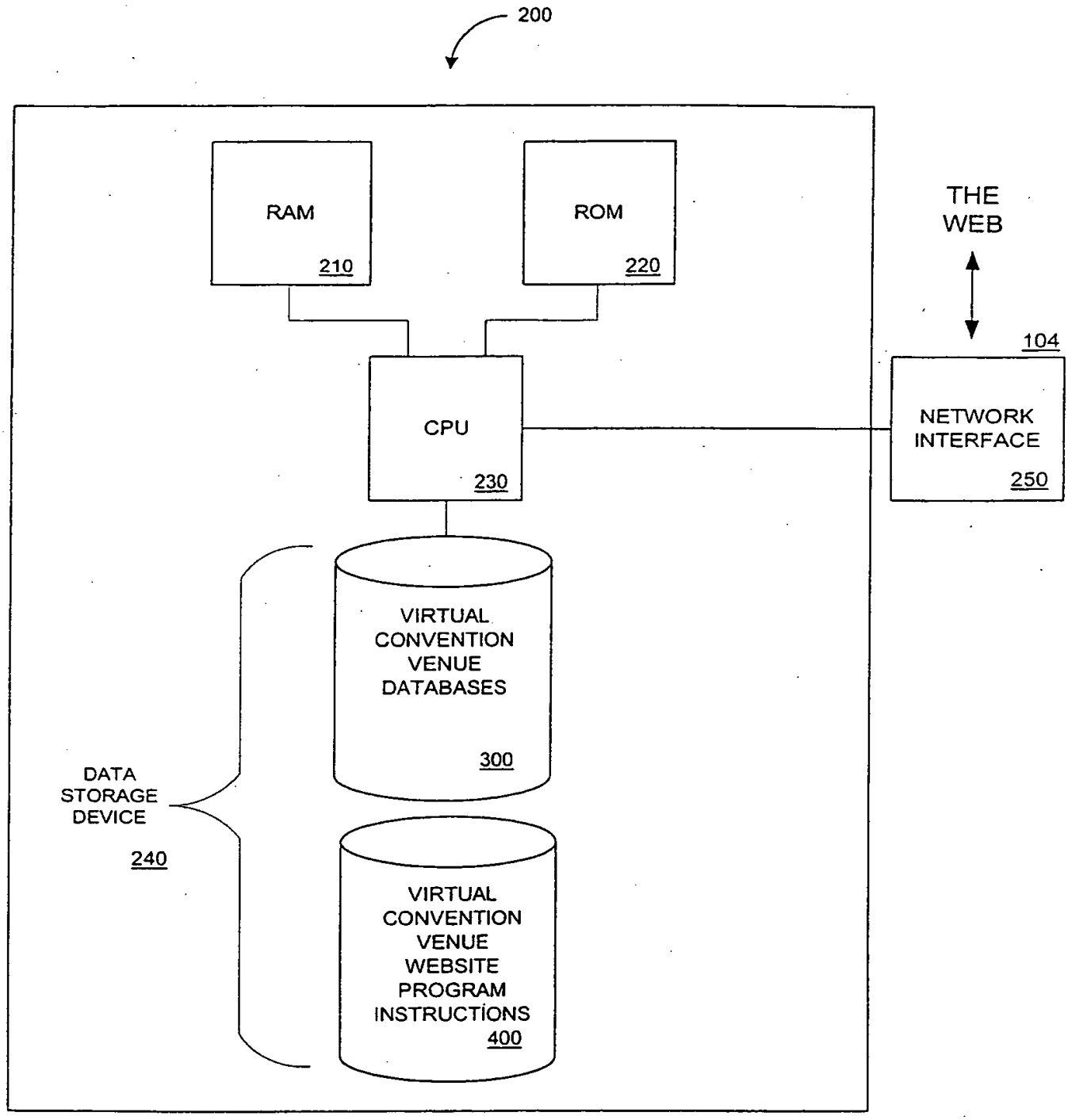

200
RAM
210
ROM
220
THE WEB
104
CPU
230
NETWORK INTERFACE
250
VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE DATABASES
300
DATA STORAGE DEVICE
240
VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE WEBSITE PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
400

FIGURE 2

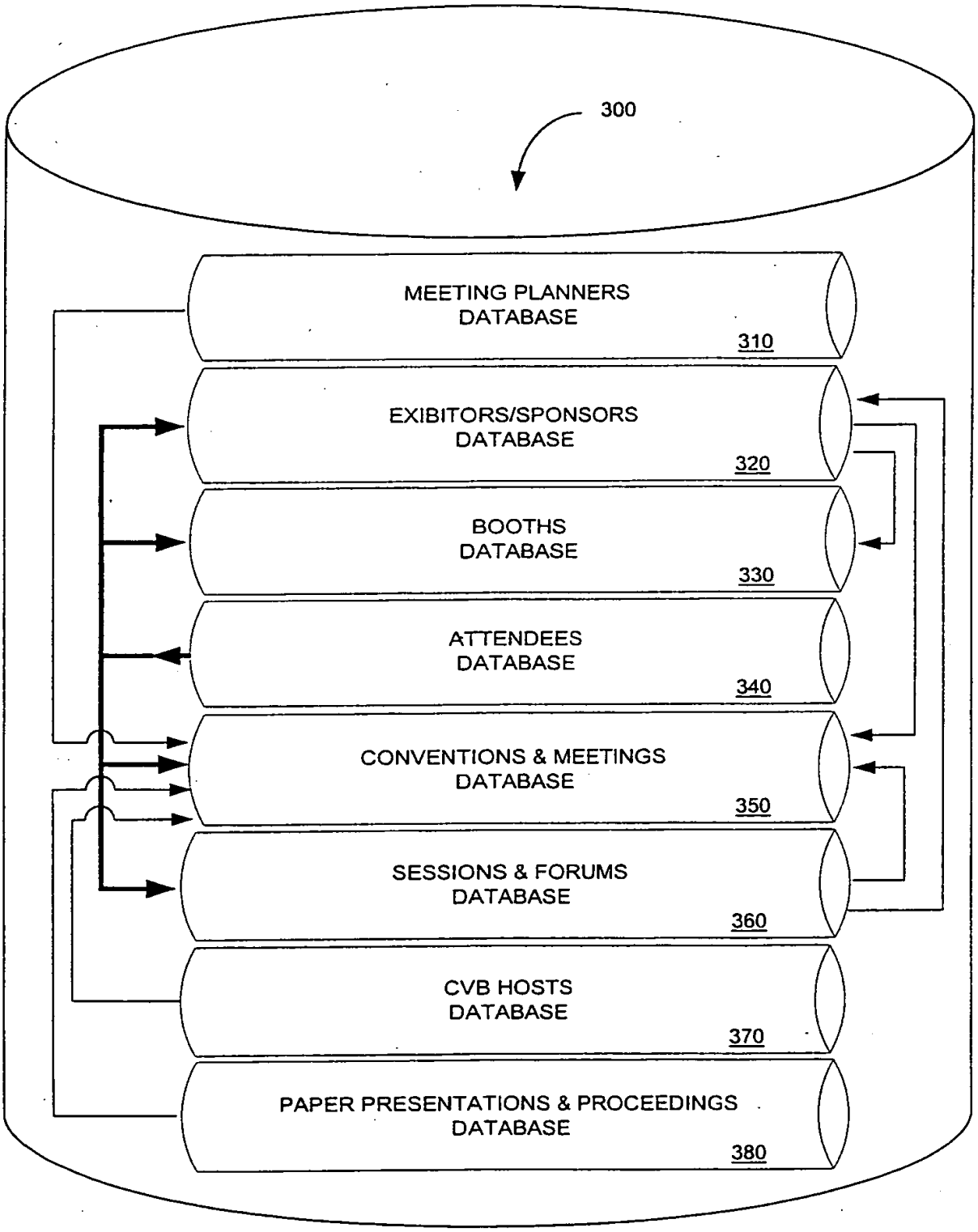

300
MEETING PLANNERS DATABASE
310
EXIBITORS/SPONSORS DATABASE
320
BOOTHS DATABASE
330
ATTENDEES DATABASE
340
CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS DATABASE
350
SESSIONS & FORUMS DATABASE
360
CVB HOSTS DATABASE
370
PAPER PRESENTATIONS & PROCEEDINGS DATABASE
380

FIGURE 3

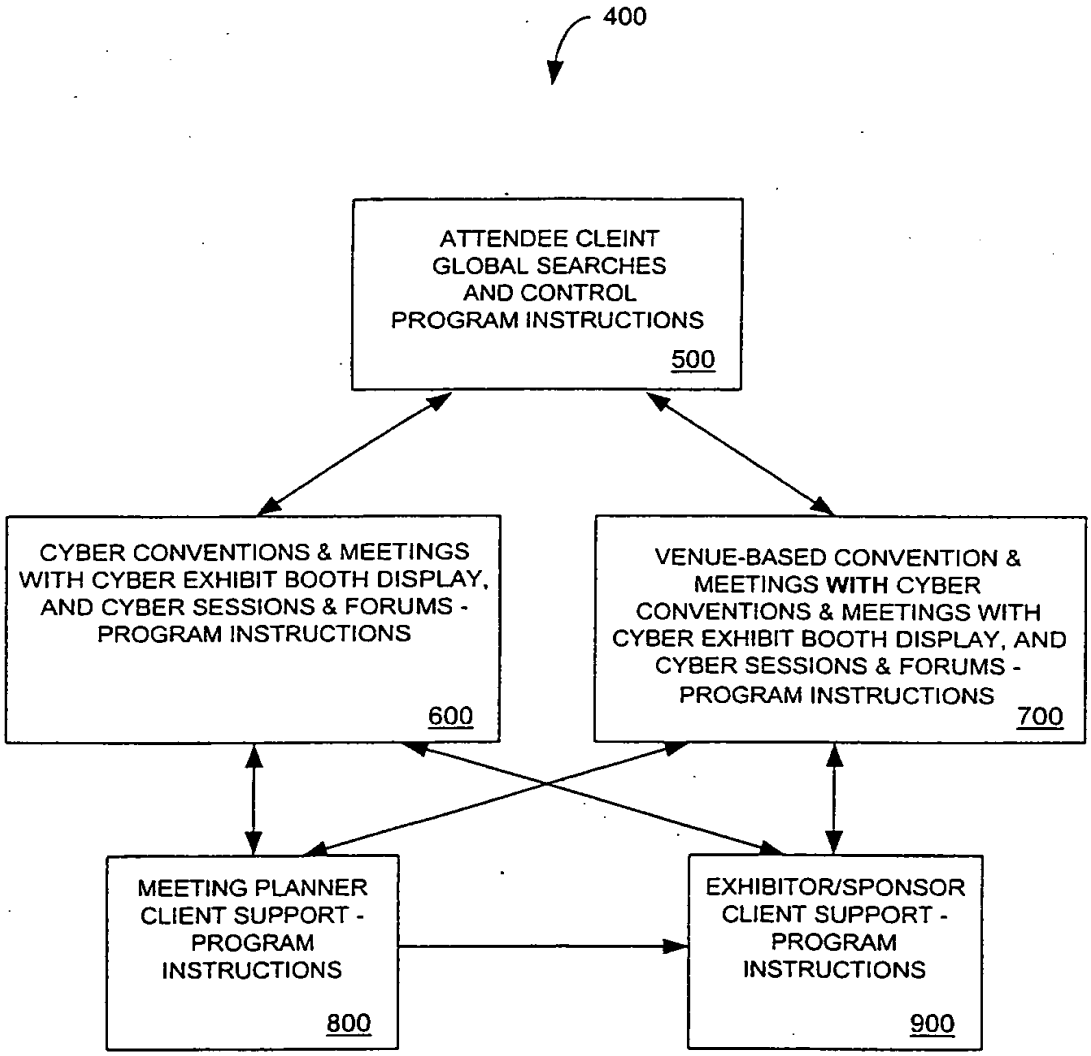

400
ATTENDEE CLEINT GLOBAL SEARCHES AND CONTROL PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
500
CYBER CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS WITH CYBER EXHIBIT BOOTH DISPLAY, AND CYBER SESSIONS & FORUMS - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
600
VENUE-BASED CONVENTION & MEETINGS WITH CYBER CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS WITH CYBER EXHIBIT BOOTH DISPLAY, AND CYBER SESSIONS & FORUMS - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
700
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT SUPPORT - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
800
EXHIBITOR/SPONSOR CLIENT SUPPORT - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
900

FIGURE 4

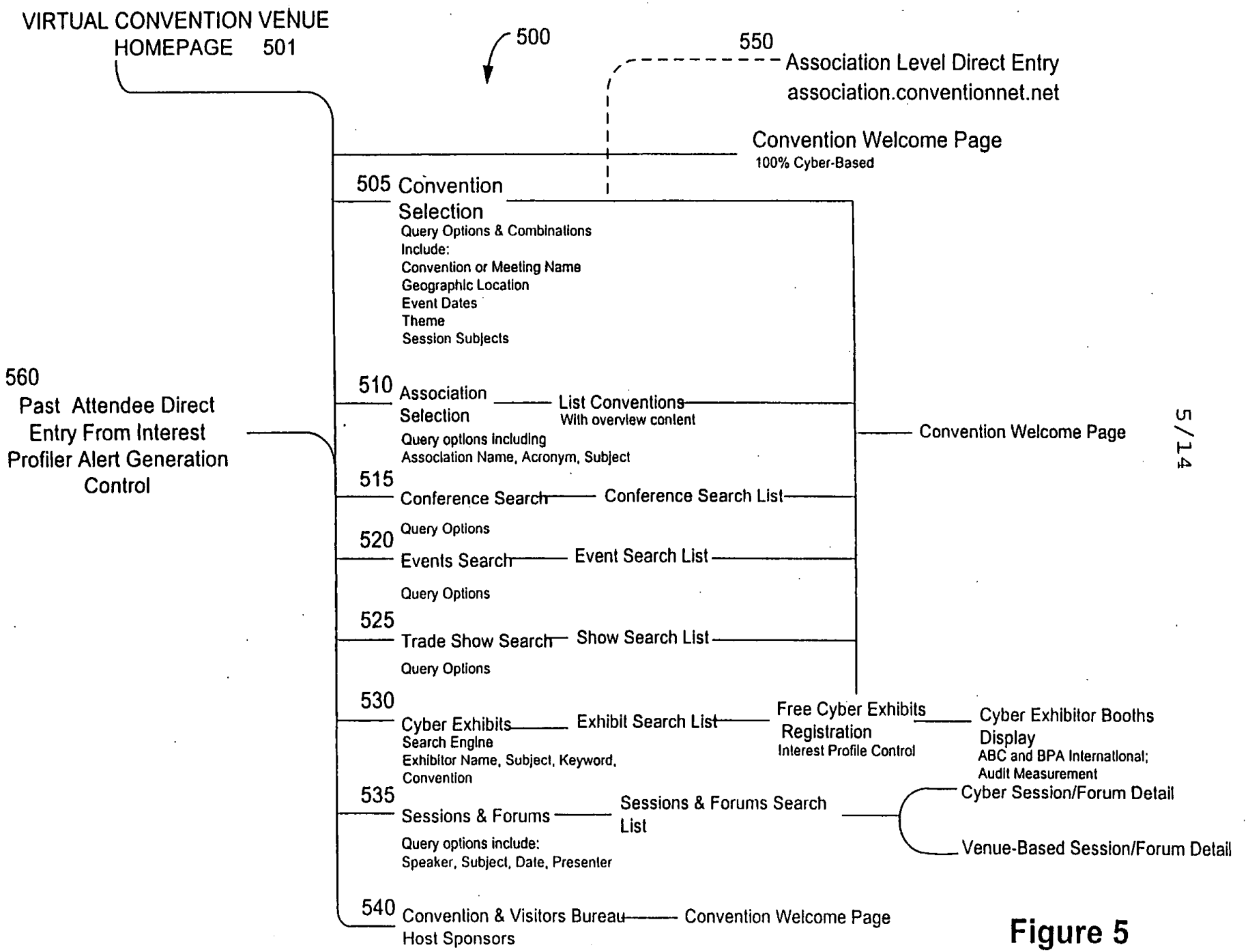

VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE HOMEPAGE 501
500
550
Association Level Direct Entry
association.conventionnet.net
Convention Welcome Page
100% Cyber-Based
505 Convention Selection
Query Options & Combinations
Include:
Convention or Meeting Name
Geographic Location
Event Dates
Theme
Session Subjects
560
Past Attendee Direct Entry From Interest Profiler Alert Generation Control
510 Association Selection
List Conventions
With overview content
Query options including
Association Name, Acronym, Subject
Convention Welcome Page
515 Conference Search
Conference Search List
Query Options
520 Events Search
Event Search List
Query Options
525 Trade Show Search
Show Search List
Query Options
530 Cyber Exhibits
Search Engine
Exhibitor Name, Subject, Keyword, Convention
Exhibit Search List
Free Cyber Exhibits Registration
Interest Profile Control
Cyber Exhibitor Booths Display
ABC and BPA International; Audit Measurement
535 Sessions & Forums
Query options include:
Speaker, Subject, Date, Presenter
Sessions & Forums Search List
Cyber Session/Forum Detail
Venue-Based Session/Forum Detail
540 Convention & Visitors Bureau
Host Sponsors
Convention Welcome Page

Figure 5

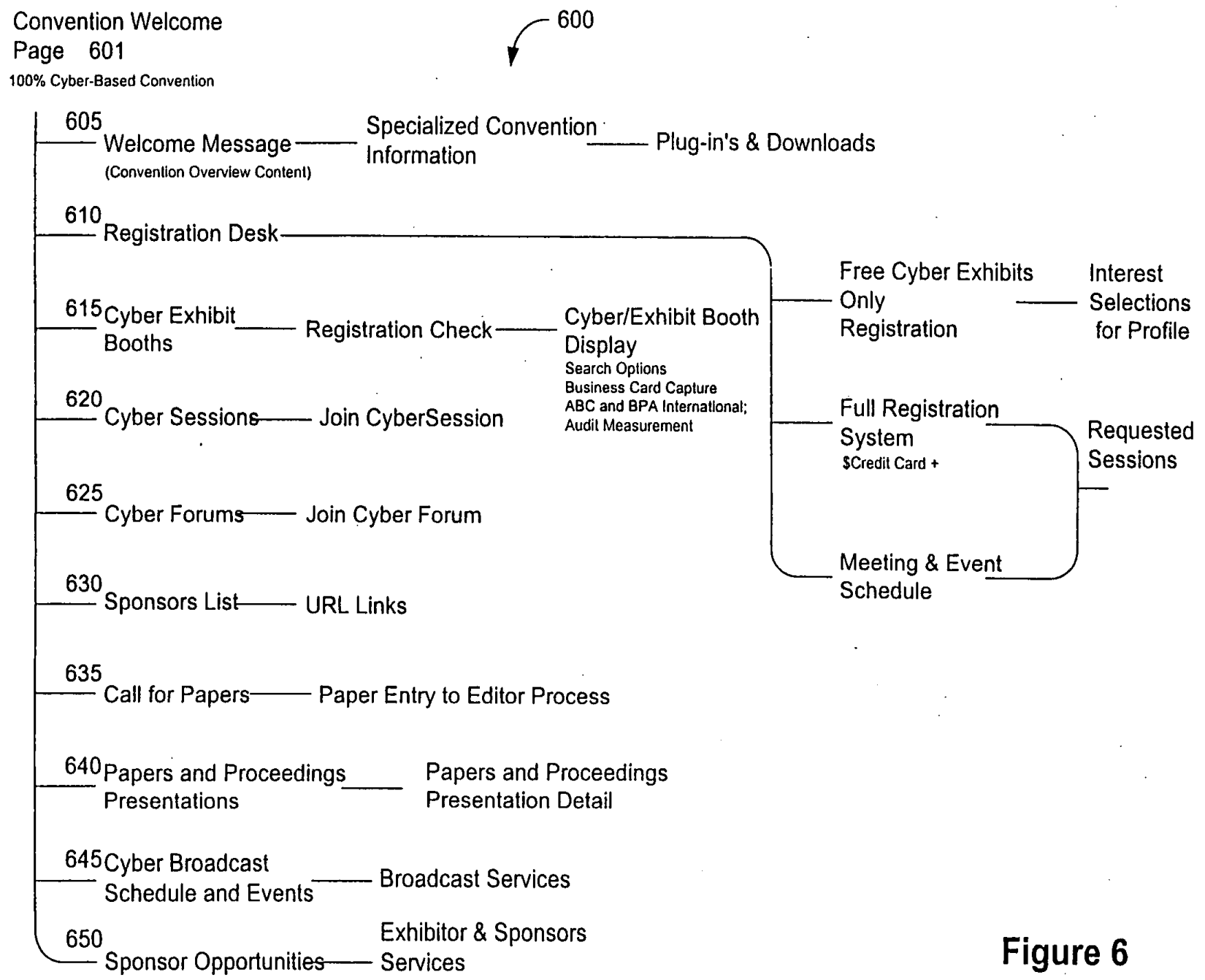

Convention Welcome
Page 601
100% Cyber-Based Convention
600
605
Welcome Message
(Convention Overview Content)
Specialized Convention Information
Plug-in's & Downloads
610
Registration Desk
615
Cyber Exhibit Booths
Registration Check
Cyber/Exhibit Booth Display
Search Options
Business Card Capture
ABC and BPA International; Audit Measurement
620
Cyber Sessions
Join CyberSession
625
Cyber Forums
Join Cyber Forum
630
Sponsors List
URL Links
635
Call for Papers
Paper Entry to Editor Process
640
Papers and Proceedings Presentations
Papers and Proceedings Presentation Detail
645
Cyber Broadcast Schedule and Events
Broadcast Services
650
Sponsor Opportunities
Exhibitor & Sponsors Services
Free Cyber Exhibits Only Registration
Interest Selections for Profile
Full Registration System
$Credit Card +
Requested Sessions
Meeting & Event Schedule

Figure 6

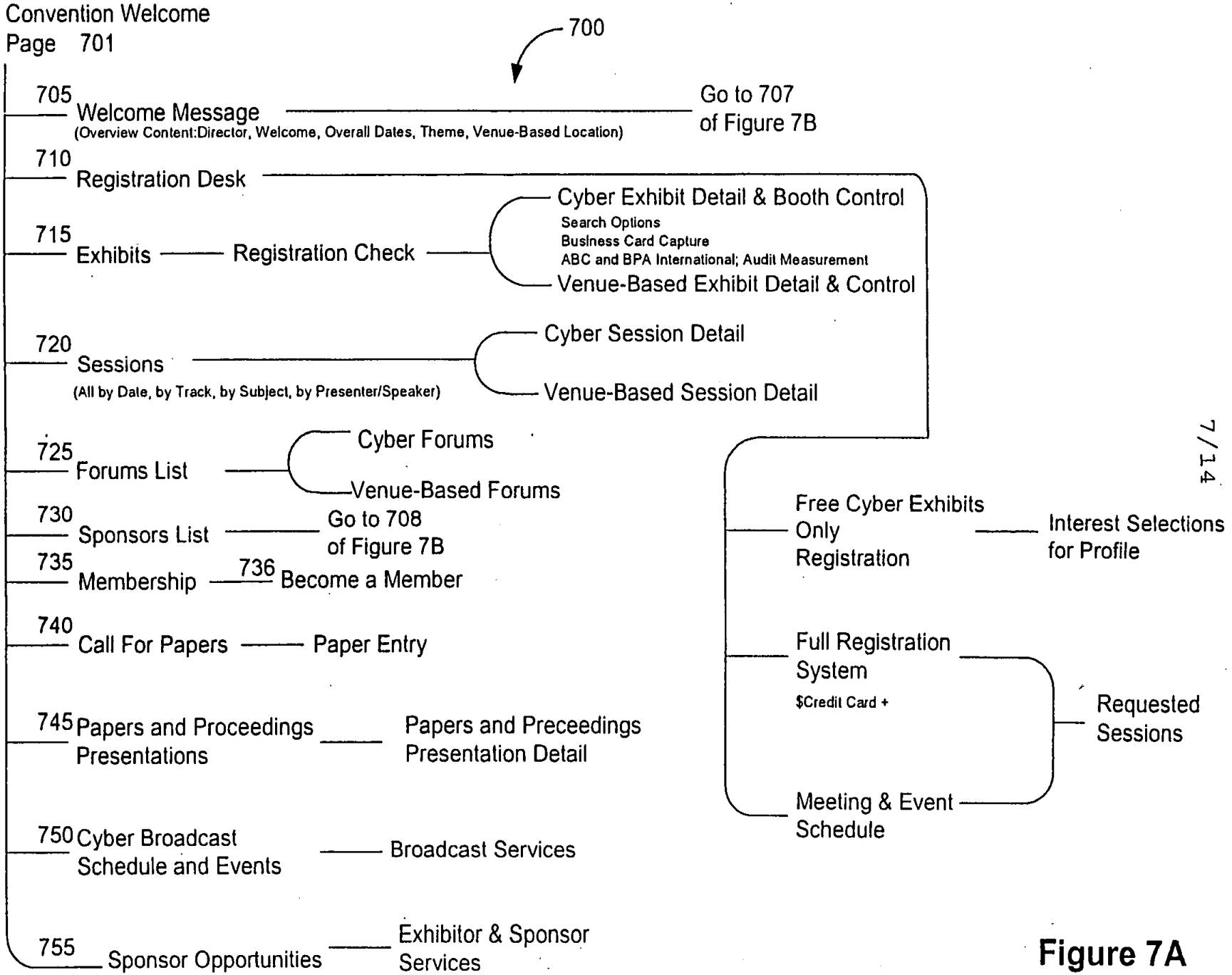

Convention Welcome Page 701
700
705 Welcome Message
(Overview Content:Director, Welcome, Overall Dates, Theme, Venue-Based Location)
Go to 707 of Figure 7B
710 Registration Desk
715 Exhibits
Registration Check
Cyber Exhibit Detail & Booth Control
Search Options
Business Card Capture
ABC and BPA International; Audit Measurement
Venue-Based Exhibit Detail & Control
720 Sessions
(All by Date, by Track, by Subject, by Presenter/Speaker)
Cyber Session Detail
Venue-Based Session Detail
725 Forums List
Cyber Forums
Venue-Based Forums
730 Sponsors List
Go to 708 of Figure 7B
735 Membership
736 Become a Member
740 Call For Papers
Paper Entry
745 Papers and Proceedings Presentations
Papers and Preceedings Presentation Detail
750 Cyber Broadcast Schedule and Events
Broadcast Services
755 Sponsor Opportunities
Exhibitor & Sponsor Services
Free Cyber Exhibits Only Registration
Interest Selections for Profile
Full Registration System
$Credit Card +
Requested Sessions
Meeting & Event Schedule

Figure 7A

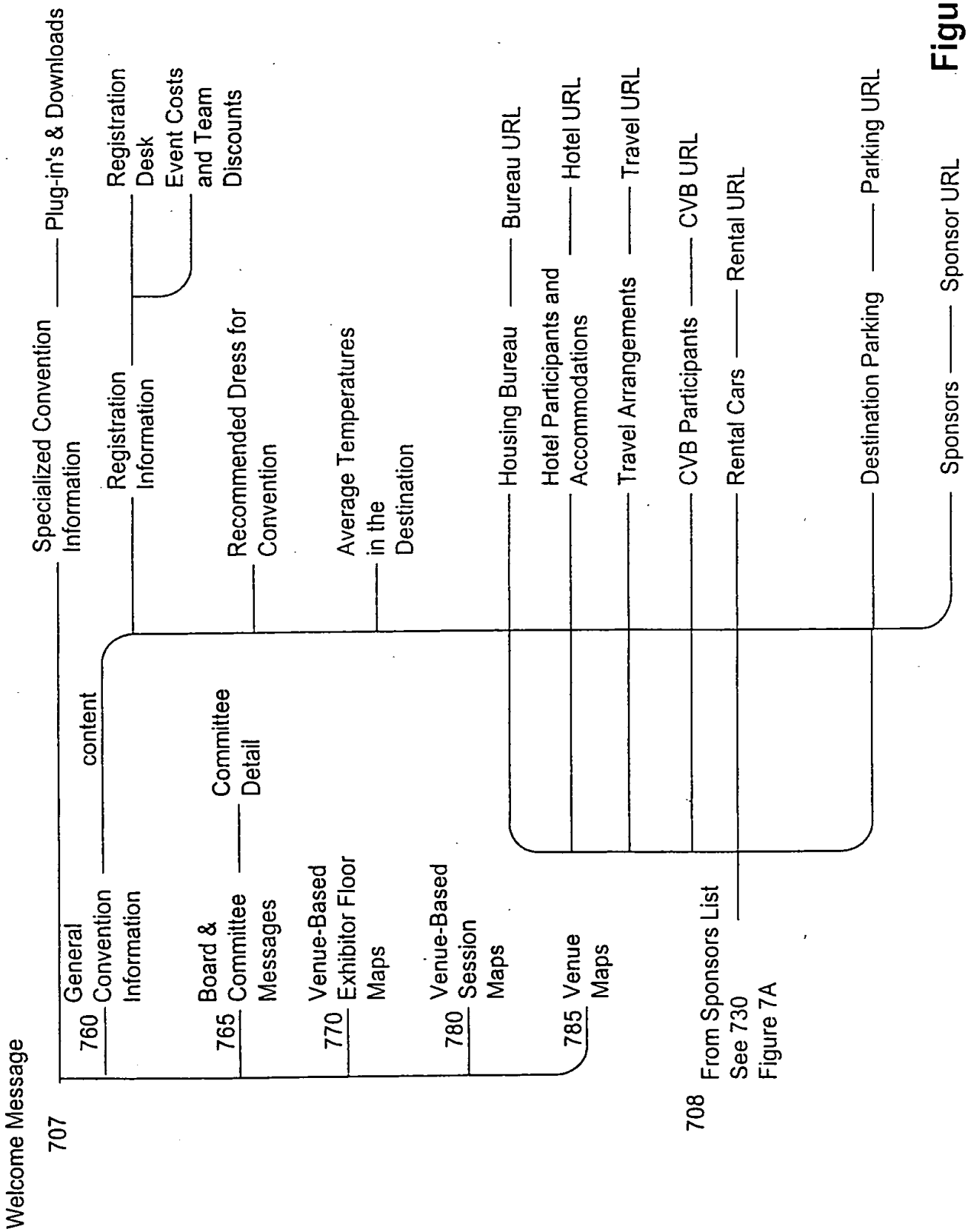

Welcome Message
707
General Convention Information
760
content
Specialized Convention Information
Plug-in's & Downloads
Registration Information
Registration Desk
Event Costs and Team Discounts
Recommended Dress for Convention
Average Temperatures in the Destination
Board & Committee Messages
765
Committee Detail
Venue-Based Exhibitor Floor Maps
770
Venue-Based Session Maps
780
Venue Maps
785
Housing Bureau
Bureau URL
Hotel Participants and Accommodations
Hotel URL
Travel Arrangements
Travel URL
CVB Participants
CVB URL
Rental Cars
Rental URL
Destination Parking
Parking URL
Sponsors
Sponsor URL
From Sponsors List
See 730
Figure 7A
708

Figure 7B

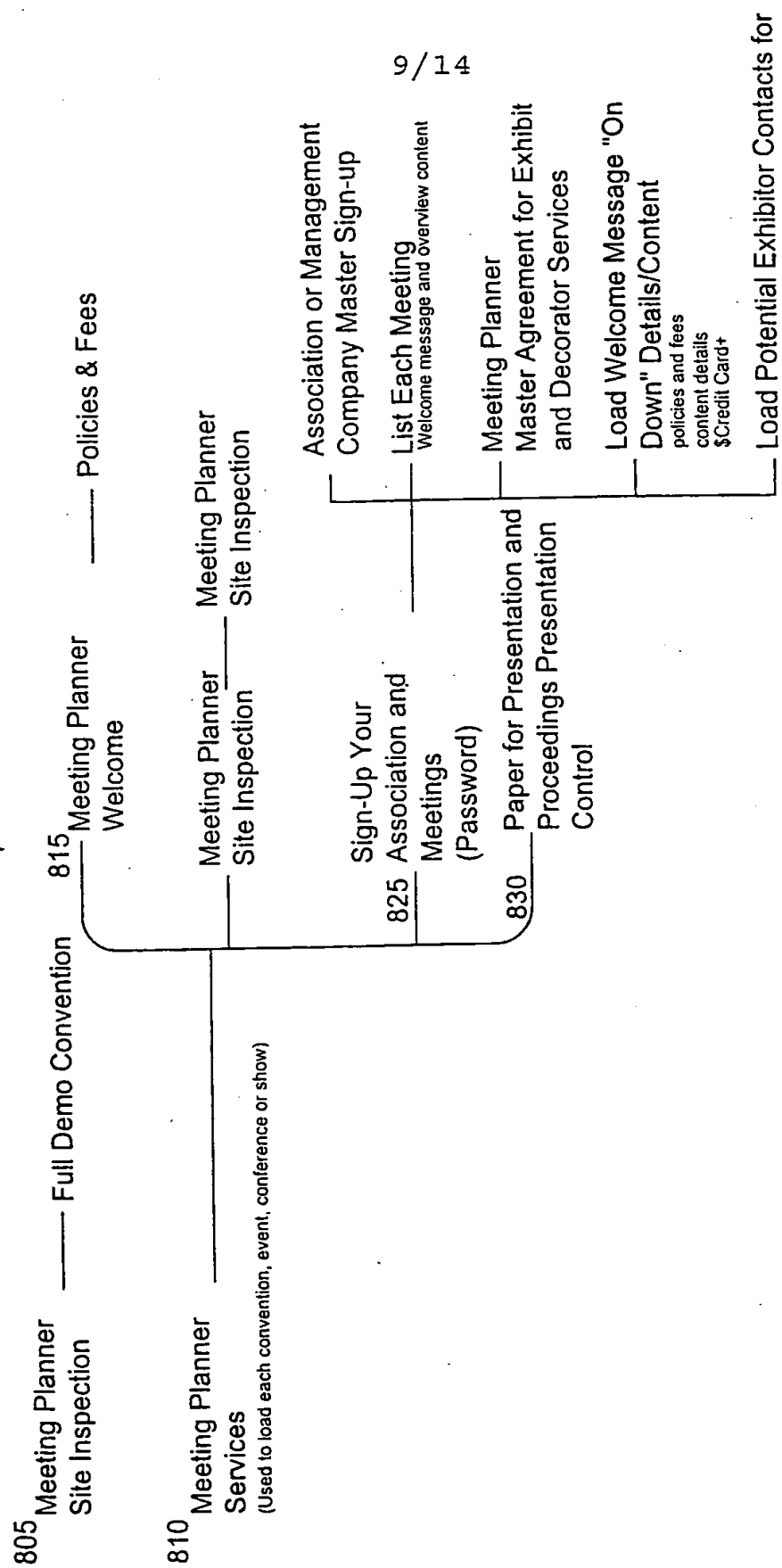

800
805 Meeting Planner Site Inspection
810 Meeting Planner Services
(Used to load each convention, event, conference or show)
Full Demo Convention
815 Meeting Planner Welcome
Meeting Planner Site Inspection
Policies & Fees
Meeting Planner Site Inspection
Sign-Up Your Association and Meetings (Password)
825
830 Paper for Presentation and Proceedings Presentation Control
Association or Management Company Master Sign-up
List Each Meeting
Welcome message and overview content
Meeting Planner Master Agreement for Exhibit and Decorator Services
Load Welcome Message "On Down" Details/Content
policies and fees
content details
$Credit Card+
Load Potential Exhibitor Contacts for Internet-Based Sales

Figure 8

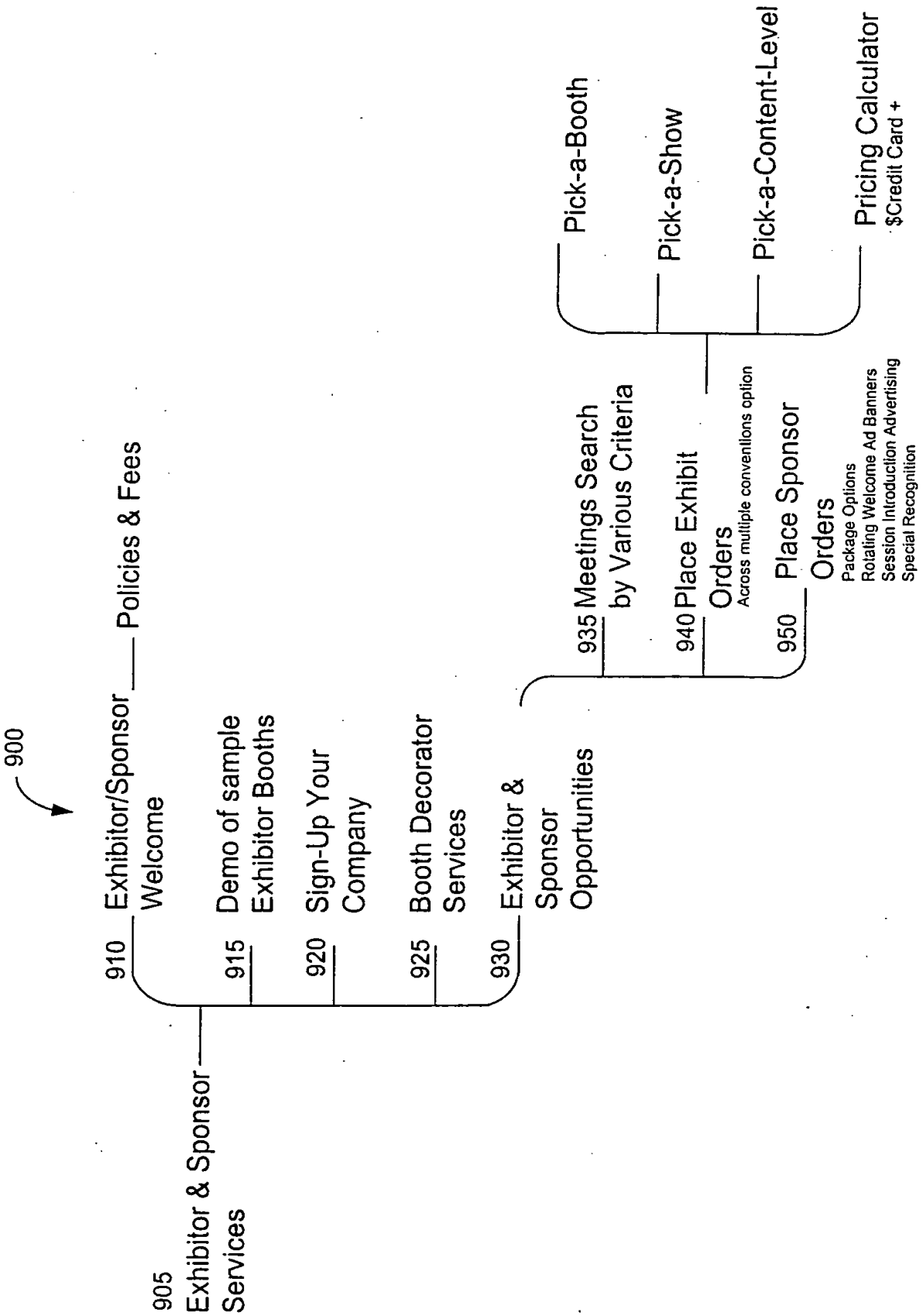

900
905 Exhibitor & Sponsor Services
910 Exhibitor/Sponsor Welcome
Policies & Fees
915 Demo of sample Exhibitor Booths
920 Sign-Up Your Company
925 Booth Decorator Services
930 Exhibitor & Sponsor Opportunities
935 Meetings Search by Various Criteria
940 Place Exhibit Orders
Across multiple conventions option
950 Place Sponsor Orders
Package Options
Rotating Welcome Ad Banners
Session Introduction Advertising
Special Recognition
Pick-a-Booth
Pick-a-Show
Pick-a-Content-Level
Pricing Calculator
$Credit Card +

Figure 9

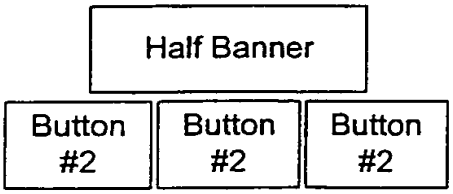


FIGURE 10A

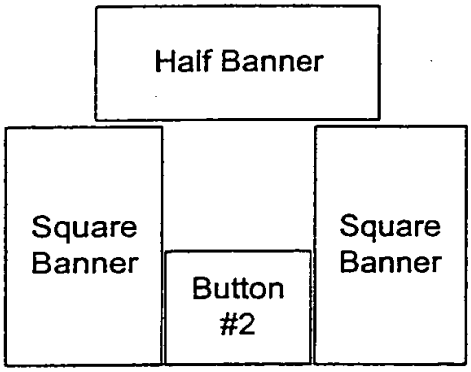


FIGURE 10B

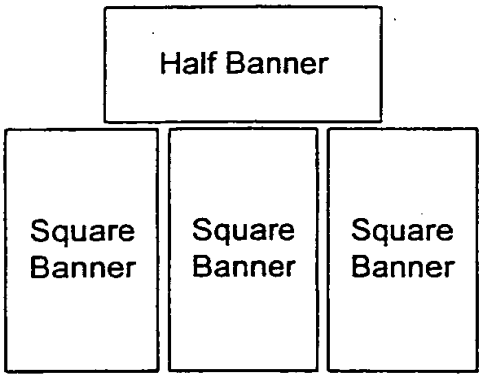


FIGURE 10C

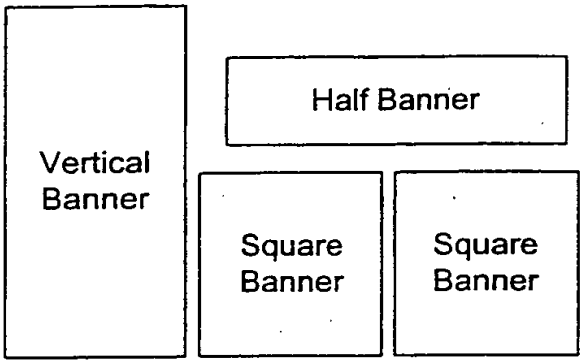


FIGURE 10D

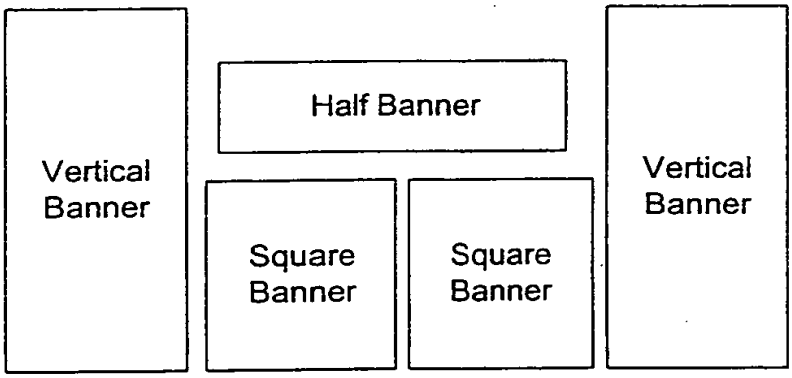


FIGURE 10E

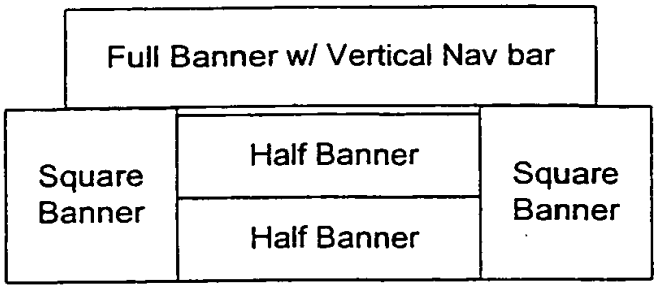


FIGURE 10F

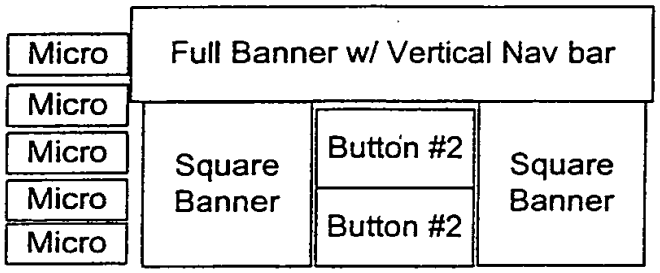


FIGURE 10G

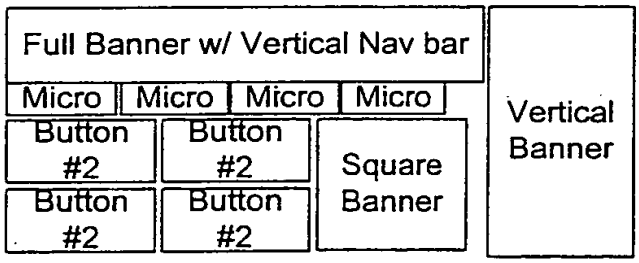


FIGURE 10H

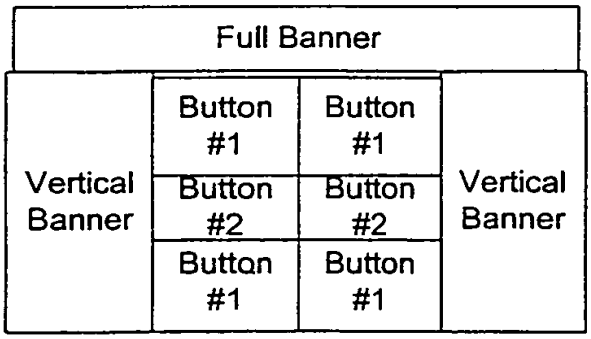


FIGURE 10I

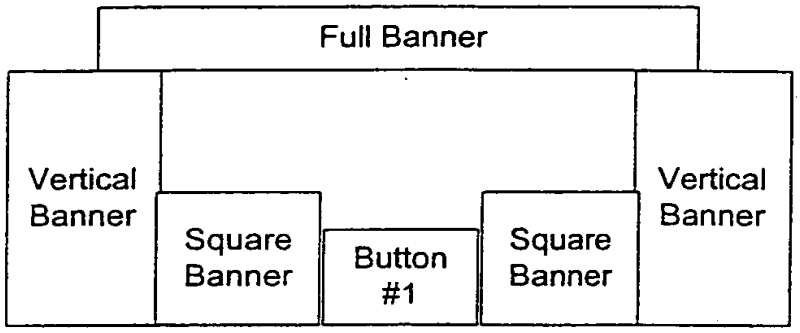

Full Banner
Vertical Banner
Square Banner
Button #1
Square Banner
Vertical Banner

FIGURE 10J

PCT WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : G06F 15/00, 15/16

A1

(11) International Publication Number: **WO 00/39694**

(43) International Publication Date: 6 July 2000 (06.07.00)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US99/31285

(22) International Filing Date: 30 December 1999 (30.12.99)

(30) Priority Data:

60/114,128	30 December 1998 (30.12.98)	US
60/114,396	31 December 1998 (31.12.98)	US

(71)(72) Applicant and Inventor: FRANKE, Paul, D. [US/US]; 2312 Cramden Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241 (US).

(74) Agents: ORKIN, Russell, D. et al.; Webb Ziesenheim Logsdon Orkin & Hanson, P.C., 700 Koppers Building, 436 Seventh Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219–1818 (US).

(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published

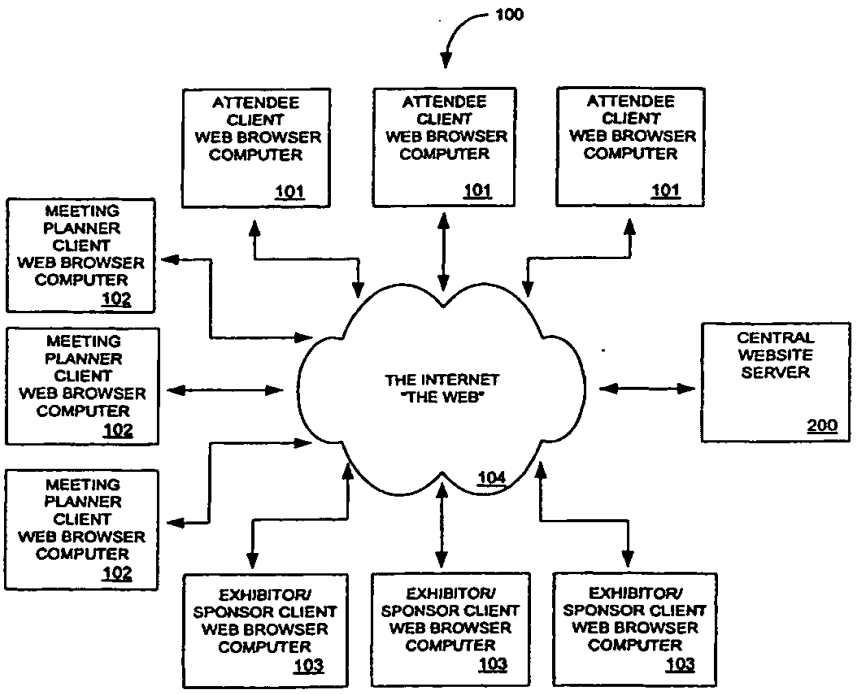
With international search report.

Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.

(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING A PLURALITY OF CYBER–BASED CONVENTIONS

(57) Abstract

A method and system for conducting multiple Internet–based conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings ("conventions") includes a plurality of meeting planner clients (102), exhibitor/sponsor clients (103) and attendee clients (101), all using web browser computers and a central website server (200) on the Internet (104). The system receives and stores initial convention data, and control parameter rules from meeting planner clients (102). Then the system receives and stores exhibit booth display data and control parameter rules for said convention from exhibitor/sponsor clients (103). Based on search criteria provided by the participating attendee client (101), the central website server (200) releases stored database convention information and provides a wide array of convention activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases. Thus, the system allows the creation of a "virtual convention venue" for conventions that exist only on the central website server (200) and available using the Internet (104). Additionally, the system supports and augments a convention being held in a physical or venue–based center (e.g., Moscone Center in San Francisco).



FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	**ES**	Spain	**LS**	Lesotho	**SI**	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	**FI**	Finland	**LT**	Lithuania	**SK**	Slovakia
AT	Austria	**FR**	France	**LU**	Luxembourg	**SN**	Senegal
AU	Australia	**GA**	Gabon	**LV**	Latvia	**SZ**	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	**GB**	United Kingdom	**MC**	Monaco	**TD**	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	**GE**	Georgia	**MD**	Republic of Moldova	**TG**	Togo
BB	Barbados	**GH**	Ghana	**MG**	Madagascar	**TJ**	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	**GN**	Guinea	**MK**	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	**TM**	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	**GR**	Greece			**TR**	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	**HU**	Hungary	**ML**	Mali	**TT**	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	**IE**	Ireland	**MN**	Mongolia	**UA**	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	**IL**	Israel	**MR**	Mauritania	**UG**	Uganda
BY	Belarus	**IS**	Iceland	**MW**	Malawi	**US**	United States of America
CA	Canada	**IT**	Italy	**MX**	Mexico	**UZ**	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	**JP**	Japan	**NE**	Niger	**VN**	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	**KE**	Kenya	**NL**	Netherlands	**YU**	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	**KG**	Kyrgyzstan	**NO**	Norway	**ZW**	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	**KP**	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	**NZ**	New Zealand		
CM	Cameroon			**PL**	Poland		
CN	China	**KR**	Republic of Korea	**PT**	Portugal		
CU	Cuba	**KZ**	Kazakstan	**RO**	Romania		
CZ	Czech Republic	**LC**	Saint Lucia	**RU**	Russian Federation		
DE	Germany	**LI**	Liechtenstein	**SD**	Sudan		
DK	Denmark	**LK**	Sri Lanka	**SE**	Sweden		
EE	Estonia	**LR**	Liberia	**SG**	Singapore		

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING A PLURALITY OF CYBER-BASED CONVENTIONS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

The present invention relates to the field of networked computer systems. Specifically, the present invention relates to the field of sharing information in an Internet-based convention system.

2. Description of the Related Art

Convention, event, conference, trade show and meeting ("convention") attendance for all parties involved ("clients") is currently a costly, time-consuming process. Travel costs and the size of many conventions have made gathering of information at a convention a much less efficient process. For large conventions, there is a need for a systematic method of locating exhibitors and retrieving information. The widespread availability of computers with graphics capabilities and Internet connectivity makes it feasible to use them to simulate various aspects of a convention to augment or replace a visit to the physical conference location.

Many attendees would like to attend a convention through the convenience of the Internet and web-browser computers. Many professional meeting planners working with associations or corporations would like to set up and hold their conventions only on the Internet or to support or augment their venue-based conventions. And, many exhibitor/sponsors would like to participate at a convention through the convenience of the Internet.

Until now, there has been no suitable way to enable these three fundamental "clients" to participate with the full functions of the convention industry using the convenience of the Internet. The meeting planner client needs to perform the central processing functions to load and control their specific virtual convention, trade show or meeting. The exhibitor/sponsor client needs to perform the processing functions to design, load and control their specific exhibits and sponsor orders related to conventions, trade shows or meetings that meet their

specific marketing and participation criteria. Finally, an attendee client needs a wide array of sensible convention functions including: convention selection, association selection, conference search, events search, show search, session and forum attendance and exhibit display visits.

A variety of methods involving an attendee client viewing exhibit booths in a virtual-only trade show or participating in a session and forum have been implemented resembling an Internet-based convention. Despite these resemblances, significant omissions were determined upon reviewing these websites and comparing methods in terms of the invention.

Of primary importance in terms of omission was that all sites demonstrated a single-specific convention situation (e.g., single association, single industry, single product classification). No sites were found offering a plurality of separate conventions, nor were methods found to support multiple conventions.

Another primary omission was that all sites were either solely "venue-based content convention" or solely "cyber-based content convention" in terms of any methods demonstrated. No combination "venue-with-cyber" methods were demonstrated for allowing the creation of a "virtual convention venue" for conventions that exist on the central website server while concurrently supporting and augmenting a convention being held in a physical or venue-based center.

Another primary omission was that no methods were demonstrated for meeting planner client services; it appeared that meeting and convention content information and support control, if any, were pre-loaded by a webmaster/programmer.

Another primary omission was that no methods were demonstrated for exhibitor/sponsor client services. It appeared that exhibit booth design, content and processing flow, if any, were again pre-loaded or built by a webmaster/programmer. Also, the important method presented

in the invention of using exhibit booth panel sizes made up of advertising standard ad banner sizes was not demonstrated.

Fundamentally, the sites appeared to place overall design emphasis only on the trade show aspects and not the other important activities of the complete convention. Attendee client methods were generally limited to simple listings and displays of exhibitor information. A wide range of convention activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases presented in this invention were missing from the sites reviewed. By way of illustration, no attendee client methods were demonstrated for call for papers, paper and proceedings presentations, membership signup, or board and committee messages. No attendee client methods were demonstrated for searching a wide range of sessions and forums by subjects or a certain speaker, or searching a plurality of conventions with extensive criteria. The exhibit content searches, when offered, were very limited.

A complete industry-standard convention includes not only trade show aspects of exhibitor booths, but also registration, sessions and forums, special events, sponsor recognition, call for papers, paper and proceedings presentations, general convention information, board and committee meetings, helpful maps, hotel support participants, CVB support participants, etc. And, three distinct and essential parties are involved in the activities to hold a successful convention: 1) the meeting planner client, who defines, organizes, and sets it up; 2) the exhibitor/sponsor client who exhibits products or services, or sponsors the various aspects; and 3) the attendee client who participates in the various functions. The robust activities of these three parties that make up a complete industry-standard convention held in a virtual convention venue were not demonstrated. Therefore, no altogether satisfactory method has heretofore been

available for conducting multiple Internet-based conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings.

The most complete example of a single-specific convention site coupled with solely "venue-based content-convention" was the IAAM 1999 Annual Conference and Trade Show. IAAM 1999 Annual Conference and Trade Show, Internet address cyber-centre.com/98iaam, demonstrated only convention content information for a single-specific venue-based event. There was a simple list of exhibitors with a solitary front-end booth lobby graphic with links to venue-based event information pages, but no exhibitor/sponsor client booths. No attendee client, meeting planner client or exhibitor/sponsor client methods were demonstrated.

Brief Summary of the Invention

The present invention advantageously fills the aforementioned deficiency in the prior art by providing a method and system for conducting multiple Internet-based conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings ("conventions") including the meeting planner clients, exhibitor/sponsor clients and attendee clients, all using web browser computers and a central website server on the Internet. The invention includes a method for conducting conventions by facilitating an exchange between meeting planner clients and attendee clients. This exchange includes electronically storing convention content information at a central website, receiving selections for convention content information from attendee clients, and releasing the selected convention content information to the attendee clients. The system receives and stores initial convention data, and control parameter rules from meeting planner clients. Then the system receives and stores exhibit booth display data and control parameter rules for said convention from exhibitor/sponsor clients. Based on search criteria provided by the participating attendee client, the central website server releases stored database convention information and provides a wide array of convention activity simulated with the program

instructions and the databases. Thus, the system allows the creation of a "virtual convention venue" for conventions that exist only on the central website server and available using the Internet. Additionally, the system supports and augments a convention being held in a physical or venue-based center (such as Moscone Center in San Francisco).

The present invention is a computer system and a method for the use of computers for implementing an Internet-based, virtual convention venue. The invention includes the computer implementation of functions associated with conventions, described here as "cyber" functions. These computer-implemented functions included attendee control, database capabilities for locating convention information, a cyber exhibit booth display system, cyber sessions and forums, cyber attendee profiler alerts, cyber meeting planner support system, and cyber exhibitor and sponsor support system, and procedures for making use of them via remote computers.

The computer system implementation also allows the creation of cyber conventions that exist only virtually, based on the Internet. The computer system can also be implemented to produce an on-line convention that is related to convention occurring at a physical location, referred to here as a venue-based convention.

Description of the Drawings

The accompanying drawings provide a further understanding of the invention and are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification. The drawings illustrate preferred embodiments of the invention, and, together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

In the drawings:

Fig. 1 illustrates a schematic overview of one embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 illustrates a block diagram of the central website server of the system in accordance with the embodiment in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 illustrates a block diagram of the virtual convention venue databases and relationships in accordance with the embodiment in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 illustrates a block diagram of the virtual convention venue program instructions in accordance with the embodiment in Fig. 1;

Fig. 5 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the attendee client global searches and control program instructions in accordance with this invention;

Fig. 6 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the cyber conventions with cyber exhibit booth display, and cyber sessions and forums - program instructions in accordance with this invention;

Figs. 7A-7B illustrate a sitemap flow diagram of venue-based conventions WITH cyber conventions with cyber exhibit booth display, and cyber sessions and forums - program instructions in accordance with this invention;

Fig. 8 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the meeting planner client support - program instructions in accordance with this invention;

Fig. 9 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the exhibitor/sponsor client support - program instructions in accordance with this invention; and

Figs. 10A-10J illustrate 10 sample exhibit booth displays used in screen views and made from common Internet advertising ad banner sizes in accordance with this invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

SYSTEM STRUCTURE

Fig. 1 is an overall system block diagram illustrating a convention system **100** and presents a preferred embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the central website server **200** is linked up over the Internet or the Web **104** to one of three separate

client types implemented as standard web browser computers: an attendee client **101**, a meeting planner client **102**, or an exhibitor/sponsor client **103**. A virtual convention venue transaction, such as a web page display or database search query, can be initiated by any one of the clients **101**, **102**, or **103** by means of a web browser computer. Fig. 1 illustrates the relationship of each type of client **101**, **102** and **103**, and their respective computers, to the central website server **200**. The information required to implement the transaction is passed between any one of the clients **101**, **102**, or **103** through a web browser computer, and the central website server **200** until the transaction is complete. The central website server **200** processes and keeps track of all transactions in the system.

The overall virtual convention venue process normally begins with a meeting planner client **102** who launches a standard web browser software program, such as Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, and establishes connection with the central website server **200** across The Web **104**. The central website server **200** performs the central processing functions to load and control the specific virtual convention, trade show or meeting of meeting planner client **102**. Multiple meeting planner clients **102** are depicted in the diagram to represent an open-ended number of meeting planner clients and subsequent conventions, trade shows and meetings. The term "meeting planner client" is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual (or association) that organizes and manages a convention, event, conference or trade show.

Next, an exhibitor/sponsor client **103** establishes connection with the central website server **200** across The Web **104**. The central website server **200** performs the processing functions to design, load and control the specific exhibits and sponsor orders related to specific virtual conventions, trade shows or meetings of exhibitor/sponsor to client **103**. Multiple

exhibitor/sponsor clients 103 are depicted in the diagram to represent an open-ended number of exhibitors and sponsors and subsequent exhibitor booths and advertising. The term "exhibitor/sponsor client" is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual or business organization that exhibits booths at a convention, event, conference or trade show; or, is a sponsor of such.

Finally, an attendee client 101 establishes connection with the central website server 200 across The Web 104. The central website server 200 now performs the functions of database query and page display processing including: convention selection, association selection, conference search, events search, show search, session and forum attendance and exhibit display visits. Again, multiple attendee clients 101 are depicted in the diagram to represent an open-ended number of convention, trade show and meeting attendees. The term "attendee" is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual that attends a convention, event, conference, or trade show.

Alternatively to beginning with only the meeting planner client 102, the virtual convention venue process can also begin with either the meeting planner client 102 or an exhibitor/sponsor client 103.

Fig. 2 illustrates a block diagram of the central website server 200 implemented as a standard computer file server capable of high-volume web initiated transactions. As shown in Fig. 2, the central website server includes a central processor unit or CPU 230, RAM 210, ROM 220, network interface 250, and data storage device 240. The data storage device 240 includes virtual convention venue databases 300, as well as the virtual convention venue program instructions 400 for CPU 230. CPU 230 is connected to each of the computer elements of the central website server 200.

CPU 230 may comprise a conventional high-speed processor capable of executing program instructions to perform the functions described herein. Although the central website server 200 is described as being implemented with a single CPU 230, in alternative embodiments the central website server 200 could be implemented with several processors operating in parallel or in series. Similarly, the other components of the central website server 200 could be expanded to handle larger volumes of web-initiated transactions and accommodate several different communication protocols.

The use of a CPU 230 in conjunction with ROM 220, RAM 210, a data storage device 240 and network interface 250 to The Web 104 is well known to those skilled in the art of computer file server website design.

Fig. 3 illustrates a block diagram of the virtual convention venue databases 300 and key record relationships including meeting planners database 310, exhibitors/sponsors database 320, booths database 330, attendees database 340, conventions database 350, sessions and forums database 360, convention and visitors bureau ("CVB") hosts databases 370, and paper presentations and proceedings database 380. The databases in venue databases 300 may be implemented as standard relational databases (such as Microsoft SQL Server7) capable of supporting searching and storing records with standard field characteristics including alpha, numeric, alphanumeric, currency, yes/no, OLE object, hyperlink, as well as multimedia information such as video data, movies, photographs, and audio data.

The exhibitors/sponsors database 320 may include cross-referencing fields to booths database 330. This allows multiple booths for each exhibitor/sponsor. Also, the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350. This allows for multiple exhibitors/sponsors per convention and for an exhibitor/sponsor to participate in multiple

conventions. The sessions and forums database 360 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350. This allows multiple sessions for each convention. The sessions and forums database 360 also may include cross-referencing fields to the exhibitors/sponsors database 320. This allows multiple exhibitors/sponsors to host or finance a convention session or sessions. The meeting planners database 310 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350; this allows multiple conventions for each meeting planner. The conventions and visitors bureau ("CVB") hosts database 370 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350. This allows a CVB to host multiple conventions. The paper presentations and proceedings database 380 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350. This allows multiple technical or professional papers to be presented and multiple meeting proceedings to be documented at a convention or meeting. Finally, the attendees database 340 may include cross-referencing fields to exhibitors/sponsors database 320, conventions database 350, sessions and forums database 360, and booths database 330. This allows tracking as well as other types of searches related to the attendees.

The use of relational databases in conjunction with website computer program instructions is well known to those skilled in the art of computer programming.

As noted above, the meeting planners database 310 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350; this allows multiple conventions for each meeting planner. Also, the meeting planners database 310 may include fields concerning individual meeting planners such as account number, name/address information, URL and e-mail information, passwords, association logo and a keyword array.

As noted above, the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 may include cross-referencing fields to booths database 330; this allows multiple booths for each

exhibitor/sponsor. Also, the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 preferably includes cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350; this allows for multiple exhibitors/sponsors per convention and for an exhibitor/sponsor to participate in multiple conventions. Cross-referencing fields are also provided to the sessions and forums database 360 for sessions sponsored, and the attendees database 340 for attendees interested, viewed exhibit or contacted. Also, the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 may include fields concerning individual exhibitors/sponsors such as name/address information, URL and e-mail information, passwords, exhibitor/sponsor logo, exhibit page control, sponsor package, welcome banners, session sponsor advertising information, and venue-based switch control.

As noted above, the booths database 330 may include cross-referencing fields to the exhibitors/sponsors database 320; this allows multiple booths for each exhibitor/sponsor. Also, the booths database 330 preferably includes cross-referencing fields to the attendees database 340 for attendees interested, viewed exhibit or wishing further information. Also, the booths database 330 preferably includes cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350 for the various conventions at which the booth appears. The booths database 330 may include fields concerning booth design type, an array of panels making up the booth, and the booth processing flow control. Fields also include accounting control and related cost totals, descriptions, exhibit subject(s) and keyword(s), exhibitor text, and venue-based switch control.

The attendees database 340 may include cross-referencing fields to exhibitors/sponsors database 320 - for exhibitors and sponsors of interest, contacted and booth viewed. Cross-referencing fields are also provided to the conventions database 350 - for specific convention registrations, previous attendance and interests. Cross-referencing fields are also provided to the sessions and

forums database 360 - for specific session and forum registrations, previous attendance and interests. Cross-referencing fields are also provided to the booths database 330 - for specific booth interest and attendance. Fields also include name/address information, e-mail information, passwords, attendance package control, venue-based switch control, paid convention accounting control array, credit card information, interest codes array, and association affiliations array.

The conventions database 350 is at the heart of the invention. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the meeting planners database 310 tying in the specific convention to the meeting planner hosting and controlling the event. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the exhibitors/sponsors database 320, tying in all related exhibitors and sponsors. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the booths database 330, tying the booths to the convention. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the attendees database 340, tying in the attendees. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the sessions and forums database 360 and CVB hosts database 370, tying the sessions and CVBs respectively. Finally, cross-referencing fields are provided to the paper presentations and proceedings database 380, tying in the multiple papers and proceedings, as appropriate. Fields also include convention content information such as:

convention name, convention type including standard convention, conference, event, or trade show;
conference name;
event name;
trade show name;
convention dates (virtual- and venue-based);
convention theme;
association name;
association acronym;
association subjects;
welcome message;

convention overview;
convention logo;
convention registration fees;
exhibitor/sponsor client registration edit criteria control parameters;
exhibitor/sponsor client booth criteria control parameters;
attendee client registration edit criteria control parameters;
sessions and forums processing flow control parameters;
call for papers processing flow control parameters;
cyber broadcast processing flow control parameters;
potential exhibitor and sponsor contacts;
convention phone number;
convention fax number;
board and committee messages/reports;
program plug-ins and downloads;
convention URL address; and,
convention e-mail address.

Further fields in conventions database 350 differentiated for the convention parameter type equal to "venue-with-cyber" include:

venue-based name and address information;
venue-based pictures;
venue-based registration information;
venue-based registration fees;
venue-based exhibitor floor maps;
geographic location;
recommended dress;
average temperatures at the venue-based destination;
direction information for boards and committees;
housing bureau involvement and program link control with URL links;
hotel participants and accommodations with URL links;
travel arrangements with URL links;
convention and visitor bureau ("CVB") participants with URL links;

rental car transportation with URL links;
venue-based destination parking with URL links; and,
sponsors list with URL links.

As noted above, the sessions and forums database 360 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350, allowing multiple sessions and forums for each convention, tied to the said convention. This tie to the convention also provides a cross-link tie to the paper presentations and proceedings database 380, and subsequent information such as individual papers presented and session and forum proceedings. Further, the sessions and forums database 360 includes cross-referencing fields to the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 allowing multiple exhibitors and sponsors to host or finance a session or sessions. As described above, the sessions and forums database 360 also has cross-referencing fields to the attendees database 340 for the multiple attendees attending each session or forum. Further fields in the sessions and forums database 360 include speaker name, session or forum name, subject(s), sponsor copy words, session or forum copy words, dates/times, special fees, handout materials, audio-visual notes, multimedia control, and presenter. Further fields in the sessions and forums database 360 differentiated for the convention parameter type equal to "venue-with-cyber" include venue-based floor maps of the sessions and forums.

As noted above, the convention and visitors bureau ("CVB") hosts database 370 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350 allowing a CVB to host multiple conventions. Fields in the CVB database 370 include CVB name/address-type information, URL and e-mail addresses, special banner or other advertising.

As noted above, the paper presentations and proceedings database 380 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350 allowing multiple technical or professional papers to be presented and multiple meeting proceedings to be documented at a

convention or meeting. Further fields in the paper presentations and proceedings database 380 include author, URL and email addresses, academic affiliation, keywords, abstracts, paper title, summary, paper text detail, figures, audio-visual notes, and multimedia control.

Fig. 4 illustrates a block diagram of the virtual convention venue website program instructions 400. CPU 230 (Fig. 2) is programmed with program instructions 400 using standard website programming languages such as HTML, CFML, Javascript, or CSS, and executes various functions described in connection with Figs. 5-9. These program instructions 400 can comprise, but are not limited to, flow control, web page display or a search query to the virtual convention venue databases 300 initiated by any one of the clients 101, 102, or 103 by way of web browser computers, to which information is transmitted in response. The use of program instructions 400 in conjunction with relational databases 300 on a central website server 200 is well known to those skilled in the art of computer programming and website design. These program instructions 400 comprise the information input, processing and output procedures including but not limited to receiving queries, control parameters and content information from any of the three client types, processing in terms of differentiating and storing the information, and releasing appropriate and formatted information. Described in simplest terms, the attendee client global searches and control program instructions 500 on the central website server 200 assists the attendee client 101 in determining what conventions are appropriate for their participation, "registering" and "attending" a convention in the virtual convention venue databases 300. The term "attendee" is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual that attends a convention, event, conference, or trade show. The attendee client global searches and control program instructions 500 are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 5.

The meeting planner client support program instructions 800 on the central website server 200 assists the meeting planner client 102 in setting up, organizing, and controlling a convention in the virtual convention venue databases 300 linked up over The Web 104. The meeting planner client support program instructions 800 are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 8.

Similarly, the exhibitor/sponsor client support program instructions 900 on the central website server 200 assist the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 in determining what conventions are appropriate for their participation, and in ordering and setting up a booth (or booths) and sponsorship at a convention in the virtual convention venue databases 300. The exhibitor/sponsor client support program instructions 900 are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 9.

The attendee client global searches and control program instructions 500 on the central website server 200 assists the attendee client 101 in determining what conventions are appropriate for their participation, "registering" and "attending" a convention in the virtual convention venue databases 300. The attendee client global searches and control program instructions 500 are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 5.

Block 600 in Fig. 4 illustrates the program instructions on the central website server 200 associated with flow control, web page display or query to the virtual convention venue databases 300 with respect to a 100% "cyber-based" convention. The computer system implementation allows the creation of cyber conventions that exist only in virtual reality, based on the Internet. It is important to note that the program instructions 600 may be configured to execute only IF the convention defined in conventions database 350 is only 100% cyber-based e.g., not a convention also being held in a physical (venue-based) center such as The Moscone Center in San Francisco (venue based convention). The attendee client 101 now has

a wide array of convention activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases. These activities are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 6.

Block **700** on Fig. 4 illustrates the program instructions on the central website server **200** associated with flow control, web page display or query to the virtual convention venue databases **300** with respect to a "cyber-based" convention augmenting a venue-based convention. The computer system implementation allows the creation of a cyber convention available to attendees at any time before, during, or after a venue-based convention. Again, the program instructions **700** may be configured to execute with or in support of a venue-based convention. The attendee client **101** has a wide array of activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases. These activities are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 7.

System Operation

The operation of system **100** is now further described in connection with the sitemap flow diagrams shown in Figs. 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 and reference the sample exhibit booth displays shown in Figs. 10A-10J. The use of sitemap flow diagrams in conjunction with website computer program instructions is well known to those skilled in the art of computer programming.

System **100**, through the computer programs **400** described below and the interaction with the virtual convention venue databases **300** on the central website server **200**, provides the method and apparatus for conducting multiple Internet-based conventions. Because of modern relational database storage capabilities and the database design presented herein, it is important to note that the invention accommodates, simultaneously, a number of conventions, meeting planner clients, exhibitor/sponsor clients, attendee clients, exhibitor/sponsor booths, sessions and forums, technical or professional papers, proceedings documents, and CVB hosts.

Fig. 5 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the attendee client global searches and control program instructions **500** in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. From the virtual convention venue homepage **501**, a prototypical top-level programming control point in website design, the attendee client global searches and control program instructions **500** provide a wide array of search entry points into the virtual convention venue databases **300** and dive-down/branch control to additional program instructions as depicted in Fig. 5. The term "dive down/branch control" refers to the capability of the program to execute a portion of the program instructions in response to a user selection choice, and to the configuration of the program so that smaller portions so executed are nested within larger portions so executed. The attendee client **101** has several major selection choices with follow-up database query and page display processing including: convention selection **505**, association selection **510**, conference search **515**, events search **520**, trade show search **525**, cyber exhibits **530**, sessions and forums **535**, or convention and visitor bureau ("CVB") host sponsors **540**. Each of these programmed selection choices has special search and database list or follow-on processing capabilities.

The convention selection **505** program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases **300** and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page display. These program instructions are directed to either or both of cyber conventions **600** and venue based and cyber conventions **700**. Query options include a search of all convention events. In this case, "conventions" include all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows by (and including combinations) of name, association name, geographic location, event dates, convention themes or session subjects in the databases. To provide further insight to the convention selection **505** database query and

page display process, the following search questions examples result in lists of convention records which can lead the attendee client **101** to appropriate convention welcome pages profession related examples are used where appropriate.

Example No. 1. By convention name search example.

Query What are the upcoming "bar association" conventions? Response This query results in a list of all conventions with the words "bar association" including "American Bar Association Meeting on Litigation", "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", and "Pittsburgh Bar Association Contracts Forum". Link to the appropriate convention welcome page can be made from the resulting list.

Example No. 2. By geographic location search example.

Query What conventions are being held in Orlando (city), or Florida (state or province)? Response This query results in a list of all Orlando conventions. Sub-queries What upcoming "bar association" conventions are being held in "Orlando"? What upcoming "bar association" conventions are being held with The Web **104** being the geographic location? What "bar association" conventions are being held "on The Web" at the virtual convention venue invention? Response These queries result in lists of all "bar association" conventions being held in Orlando or only on The Web **104**.

Example No. 3. By event dates (in combination) search example.

Query I have an extra couple of days, 7/15/99 through 7/19/99 in Orlando; what "bar association" meetings are going on? Event dates is also used in the compound database query and page display.

Example No. 4. By convention theme search example.

Query What are the upcoming "bar association" conventions on "intellectual property"? The convention or theme is also used in the database query.

Example No. 5. By session subjects search example.

Query What conventions have sessions and forums on "software contract writing"? The session and forums keywords are used to list the conventions.

The association selection 510 program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases 300 and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page display, again in terms of either the 100% cyber-based convention 600 or the venue-with-cyber convention 700 from the association database entry point. Query options exemplified in the following examples include a search of all conventions. Again "conventions" includes all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows by (and including combinations) of association name, acronym or association subject.

Example No. 7. By association name search example.

Query What are the upcoming "bar association" conventions? Response This query results in a list of all associations with the words "bar association" including "American Bar Association" and "Pittsburgh Bar Association". From this view, the attendee client 101 can next view all conventions for a specific association. Link to the appropriate convention welcome page can be made from the final list.

Example No. 8. By association acronym search example.

Query What are the upcoming "ABA" conventions? Response This query will first list the associations with the acronym of "ABA" including "American Bar Association", "American Beauty Association", "American Bankers Association", and "Association for Behavior Analysis".

Link to the appropriate convention welcome page can be made from the final list.

Example No. 9. By association subjects search example.

Query What are the upcoming "law" or "legal" conventions? Response This query results in a list of all associations with "law" or "legal" subject categories including "American Bar Association", "American College of Trial Lawyers", "American Society of Notaries" and "Trademark Society". From this view, the attendee client 101 can next view all conventions for a specific association. Link to the appropriate convention welcome page can be made from the final list.

A specific subset of the conventions industry is termed or identified as the "conference". The "conference" is typically a mission- or cause-oriented association sponsored meeting. An example of the "conference" convention is the Peace on Earth Conference held by the World Affairs Council of Washington. A "conference" may or may not have exhibitors.

Because certain attendee clients 101 are searching for a convention that has been termed or identified by the meeting planner client 102 as a "conference" or are specifically interested in a "conference", the invention provides a conference search 515 of the virtual conventions databases 300 of all conventions. In the virtual convention venue databases 300 "conventions" includes all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows, by (and including combinations) conference name, association name, geographic location, event dates, conference themes or session subjects. The conference search 515 program instructions process is identical to the convention selection 505 program instructions process control listed above with page direction or attendee client 101 word directions modified for "conference" and provides query search options of the database and resultant

pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page program instruction processes.

Particular conventions are termed or identified as an "event". The "event" is typically a specific topic-oriented corporate or association meeting, such as the "Xerox Top Sales Winners" event or the "Intellectual Property Writing Workshop" event hosted by the American Bar Association. An "event" may or may not have exhibitors.

Because certain attendee clients **101** are searching for a convention that has been termed or identified by the meeting planner client **102** as an "event" or are specifically interested in an "event", the invention provides an events search **520** of the virtual convention venue databases **300** of all conventions. In the virtual convention venue databases **300** "conventions" includes all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows, by (and including combinations) conference name, association name, geographic location, event dates, conference themes or session subjects. The events search **520** program instructions process is identical to the convention selection **505** program instructions process control listed above with page direction or attendee client **101** word directions modified for "event" and provides query search options of the database and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page processes.

Yet another subset of the conventions industry is termed or identified as the "trade show". The "trade show" is typically a "trade" association- or organization-sponsored convention involving industry-related vendor exhibitor booths as a primary function of the convention. An example of the "trade show" convention is the Athletic Equipment Managers Show which would feature many vendor booths from the athletic sports equipment manufacturers industry.

Because certain attendee clients **101** are searching for a convention that has been termed or identified by the meeting planner client **102** as a "trade

show" or are specifically interested in a "trade show", the invention provides a trade show search 525 of the virtual convention venue databases 300 of all conventions. In the virtual convention venue databases 300 "conventions" includes all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows, by (and including combinations) conference name, association name, geographic location, event dates, conference themes or session subjects. The trade show search 525 program instructions process is identical to the convention selection 505 program instructions process control listed above with page direction or attendee client 101 word directions modified for "trade show" and provides query search options of the database and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page processes.

The cyber exhibits and cyber exhibit booth display 530 program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases 300 and resultant pathway(s) to the cyber exhibitor booths display program instructions process. A "cyber exhibit" or "cyber exhibit booth" is a unique web browser page display layout providing a show, demonstration or presentation of products and/or services made up of an open-ended number of common Internet advertising ad banner sizes arranged to appear similar to physical display booths used in the convention industry. The term "cyber" defines this overall display layout and viewing of the advertising ad banners from the virtual convention venue databases 300 accessed via the invention.

The "exhibits" or "exhibit booths" used in the invention are made up of "panels" illustrated in Figs. 10A-10J. The panels may be common Internet advertising ad banner sizes such as full banner, full banner with vertical navigation bar, half banner, square banner, vertical banner, button #1, button #2, and micro button. Each panel can also represent a major display venue in which each panel can bridge the attendee client 101 to various

promotional page venues such as the full exhibitor brochure, multiple and rotating digital photos of products, or video clips.

The cyber exhibits and cyber exhibit booth display **530** program instructions process provides query search options without the need to process the through a convention. At the attendee client **101** entry level, the search results are important and unique, bypassing the normal convention exhibit venue, because the booths listed for display are not "tied" to specific conventions. In simple terms, the cyber attendee client **101** is able to "make up" their own exhibition of booths from the virtual convention venue databases **300** based on the query options selected. Query options include a search of all cyber exhibit booths in the database as further explained in the following examples:

Example No. 10. By exhibitor name search example.

Query Show me the "Nike®" cyber exhibit booths. Response The invention finds the Nike® Activewear booth (showing golf wear) from the National Golf Foundation Annual Convention in Chicago, finds another Nike® Activewear booth from the National Youth Sports Coaches Association Fall Meeting in Orlando, finds the Nike® Skates & Ice Hockey Equipment booth from the Ice Skating Institute of America Show in London, and finds the Nike® Basketball Shoes booth from the Athletic Equipment Managers Association convention being held totally/only on The Web **104** at the virtual convention venue **100**. These cyber exhibit booths are displayed in a special Nike® exhibition for the attendee client **101**.

Example No. 11. By subject search example.

Query Show me the "sporting goods" cyber exhibit booths. Response The invention searches the virtual convention venue databases **300** and finds the conventions and exhibitors with the subject category "sporting goods" and displays the booths for the attendee client **101**. Cyber

exhibit booths from conventions may include the National Golf Foundation or National Ski Retailers Association. Exhibitors may include Winchester® and Everlast®. The cyber exhibit booths are displayed in a special exhibition for the attendee client **101**.

Example No. 12. By key word(s) search example.

This search is much more restrictive than subject search directly above. Query Show me "ice hockey gloves". Response The invention finds only one - the Hockey Zone® cyber exhibit booth from the Ice Skating Institute of America Show in London and from the key words used by the exhibitor/sponsor client **103**.

Example No. 13. By convention search example.

This databases search and program link control is special in that once a convention is selected, the attendee client 101 can go (after registration) directly to the booth displays of the selected convention. Query Show me the "bar association" convention booths. Response This query first results in a list of all conventions with booths with the words "bar association" including "American Bar Association Meeting on Litigation" and "American Bar Association Annual Meeting". Direct link (or links concatenating multiple conventions) is made to the convention-tied cyber exhibit booths - in this example showing TimeSlips® (the legal industry's time keeping and billing software), Crane® Stationery Co. (100% cotton bond engraved stationery) and ABC Mortgage Insurance (a mortgage insurance wholesaler to lawyers).

The sessions and forums **535** selection program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases **300** and resultant pathway(s) to cyber session **620** program instructions process or cyber forum **625** program instructions process of the 100% cyber-based convention **600** or to the sessions **720** program instructions process or forums **725** program

instructions process of the venue-with-cyber convention **700**. A "cyber session" or "cyber forum" is a unique 100% Internet-based session or forum application. A "venue-based session" or "venue-based forum" is a standard venue-based convention listing of sessions and forums.

Query options at sessions and forums **535** include a search of all session and forum records in the virtual convention venue databases for session and forum content. A sessions and forums search list is provided and appropriate programming link control. This is explained in the following examples:

Example No. 14. By speaker search example.

Query Are there any upcoming sessions or forums with "Alan Dershowitz"? Response ConventionNet database finds the session "The Blame Excuse by Professor Alan Dershowitz"; 10:00am to 11:00am; 7/15/99 at the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting" in Pittsburgh at the Hilton Convention Center. The invention also lists a "cyber forum" on "the Blame Excuse Defense" with Professor Alan Dershowitz hosted by the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", 8:00pm to 10:00pm EST "on" or at the virtual convention venue.

Example No. 15. Query By subject search example (e.g., "legal defense").

Example No. 16. Query By date (e.g., 7/15/99).

Example No. 17. Query By presenter - (e.g. "TimeSlips or American Bar Association").

The convention and visitor bureau host sponsors **540** selection program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases **300** and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page display - appropriate in terms of either a 100% cyber-based convention **600** or a venue-with-cyber convention **700**. Convention and Visitor Bureaus ("CVBs") are often major "hosts" of large conventions in their respective destinations. For example, the Greater

Pittsburgh Convention & Visitors Bureau hosts the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting" and assists with various meeting arrangements. In the virtual convention venue databases **300**, relational ties are made to CVB host sponsors, if applicable.

The association level direct entry **550** program instructions process defines a direct path for a specific convention for a participating association. In this way the meeting planner of the association can advertise a direct web address to the official convention welcome page for the convention. In other words, this process is designed to go around the "query search" front-end process, because the attendee client **101** is directed right to a specific convention. For example, "americanbar.conventionnet.com" can be defined in the invention by webmaster direct programming and the attendee clients **101** can be directed (by advertising or by a link from the participating association) or "started" at the specific or official convention welcome page of the American Bar Association Annual Convention.

The past attendee direct entry from interest profiler alert generation control **560** provides a program-generated alerting via standard Internet electronic mail systems to "past" attendee clients **101**, about new conventions on the virtual convention venue system **100**. The program instructions **400** tracks interests of the attendee clients **101** at various points - during cyber exhibits registration, during convention registration, just visiting a booth, attending a session or participating in a forum. This interest tracking is termed the "interest profiler". The invention periodically checks through a batch processing function the past "attendee interest profile" against new conventions, sessions, forums and exhibit booth "themes", "subjects" and "key words", and generates electronic mail to the past attendee to now visit the virtual convention venue system **100** - with appropriate matched approaches to link or direct the past attendee to

the correct level or record in the virtual convention venue databases 300 - the convention, session, forum or exhibit booth. Optionally, other batch functions accumulate numerical information and generate numerical and statistical reports from the virtual convention venue databases 300. The batch processing programming functions, operating in the background of the central website server 200, are not depicted on the sitemap flow diagrams shown in Figs. 5 through 9.

Fig. 6 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of options available through the cyber conventions program instructions 600 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. In the above discussion of Fig. 5, the title of this programming area was simplified and shortened to "100% cyber-based convention 600". It is important to again note that this programming control section 600, in terms of programming and displays, is only used if the convention is only 100% cyber-based.

From the convention welcome page 601, the 100% cyber-based convention 600 program instructions provide a wide array of processing using the virtual convention venue databases 300 to simulate attendance at a specific convention. The cyber convention is specific and defined. "Dive down" or sub-processing within this section is limited to the specific convention (e.g., "American Bar Association Meeting on Litigation", "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", or "Pittsburgh Bar Association Contracts Forum"). The attendee client 101 has several major selection choices with follow-up database query and page display processing including a convention welcome message 605, registration desk 610, cyber/exhibit booths 615 with display, cyber sessions 620, cyber forums 625, sponsors list 630, call for papers 635, papers and proceedings presentations 640, cyber broadcast schedule and events 645, and sponsor opportunities 650. Each of these programmed selection choices has special search and database list, dive-down program flow control, web page

display or follow-on processing capabilities as further described below.

The welcome message **605** program instructions displays from the virtual convention venue databases **300** the specific convention overview information such as and including a director message, welcome information, overall dates of the meeting, and meeting theme. The specific convention information would have already been set up or entered in the invention by the meeting planner client **102** through meeting planner client support - program instructions **800** (described below). Dive-down program flow control is provided to specialized convention information such as common web browser program "plug-ins and downloads" (e.g., IPIX™, RealPlayer™) needed to assist in supporting the display and programming of the cyber convention, the cyber sessions or forums, cyber broadcast events, or cyber exhibit booth displays.

The registration desk **610** program instructions directs the attendee client **101** to register for services of the specific convention. Based on registration policies and fee amounts and other registration control parameters contained in the virtual convention venue databases **300** (set up or loaded by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**) the attendee client **101** follows the program flow control and web page display instructions. The program processes the registration information obtained from the attendee client **101**. For example, cyber exhibit booth display **615** "attendance" may be "free" or the attendee client **101** can pay via a credit card or other Internet common payment approaches. Similarly, registration policies and fee amounts with program flow control can affect "attendance" at cyber sessions **620**, cyber forums **625**, cyber broadcast events **645**, or other areas as program controlled by the registration policies and fee amount fields.

During the registration desk **610** program control, the attendee client **101** also provides interest profile

information that is used in later batch processing from the past attendee direct entry from interest profiler alert generation control **560**.

Registration information is also provided to exhibitors and sponsor clients **102** enabling them to seek follow-up sales with the attendee client **101**. This information transfer may or may not be made known to the attendee client **101**.

The cyber exhibit booths **615** program control and page displays lists of the cyber exhibit booths and allows the attendee client **101** to "visit" the booths. A registration check is made to assure attendee client **101** access to the booths; if not, branch control is provided back to the registration desk **610**. The cyber exhibit detail and booth control and page displays lists the cyber exhibit booths and allows the cyber attendee to "visit" the booths. Search by various options is provided. The search options include a search of only the cyber exhibit booths in the virtual convention venue databases **300** relationship-tied to the specific convention. Options include search by exhibitor name such as the "Nike®" exhibit booths at this convention, by subject search such as the "sporting goods" exhibit booths at this convention, or by key word(s) such as "ice hockey gloves" at this convention.

As noted before, the "exhibits" or "exhibit booths" used in the invention are made up of "panels" as illustrated in Figs. 10A-10J. The panels are the common Internet advertising ad banner sizes such as full banner, full banner with vertical navigation bar, half banner, square banner, vertical banner, button #1, button #2, and micro button. Each panel can also represent a major display venue - where each panel can bridge the attendee client **101** to various promotional page venues (e.g., the full exhibitor brochure, multiple and rotating digital photos of products, or video clips). The attendee client **101** can click on any and all panels.

Size (Pixels)	Size (Inches)	Type
468 x 60	6.50 x 0.83	Full Banner
392 x 72	5.44 x 1.00	Full Banner with Vertical Navigation Bar
234 x 60	3.25 x 0.83	Half Banner
125 x 125	1.74 x 1.74	Square Banner
120 x 90	1.67 x 1.25	Button #1
120 x 60	1.67 x 0.83	Button #2
88 x 31	1.22 x 0.43	Micro Button
120 x 240	1.67 x 3.33	Vertical Banner

Advertising industry standard ABC and BPA International audit measurement is tracked in the virtual convention venue databases **300** concerning attendee client **101** visits at the booth or click-throughs from the panels for later reporting to the exhibitor/sponsor client **103**, or for billing purposes. Fees and policies concerning the attendee client **101** visit measurement and billing of the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** can be set up by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

The cyber sessions **620** and cyber forums **625** program control and page displays list the cyber sessions or forums and allows the attendee client **101** to "join". A registration check is made to assure proper access, based on registration policies and fees set up by the meeting planner client **102**. These cyber sessions and forums are specific to the convention, and are associated with the respective convention in the database. The sessions and forums are set up or loaded into the invention virtual convention venue databases **300** by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800** further described below.

For the cyber sessions and forums, interactive processing or participation by the attendee client **101** is provided with a common join-the-forum Internet chat-room-

type control with "subject" word categories or specific subject areas, with or without time attendance schedules. Also, the interactive processing or participation by the attendee client **101** to join-the-session/forum common Internet video conferencing with specific subject areas and time attendance schedules can be provided. An example of "cyber forum" is "The Blame Excuse Defense" with Professor Alan Dershowitz hosted by the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", 8:00pm to 10:00pm EST. The attendee client 101 is invited to join in.

The sponsors list **630** program control and page displays lists the special sponsors of the convention. These sponsors are specific to the convention, and are related/tied in the virtual convention venue databases **300**. The sponsors can be set up or loaded by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

In the conventions industry, the sponsors are usually "higher up" than exhibitors with their underwriting activities of the convention. This usually means sponsors receive greater exposure than exhibitors and receive the best cyber exhibit booth size and location. Therefore, the cyber exhibit booths **615** display process would take the sponsor designation in the virtual convention venue databases **300** as priority control in terms of all booth list sequences. Further, in sponsors list **630**, special advertising with URL links would be provided in this page display area.

For medical or technical conventions, the call for papers **635** program control and page displays provides the attendee client **101** a process to submit a "technical paper" for consideration by the editorial professionals of the association which would be the meeting planner client **102**. The "paper", once placed in the virtual convention venue databases **300**, can be a wide arrange of common Internet electronic presentations including multimedia information such as video, movies, photographs, and audio.

Logging of the "technical paper" and transfer processing is provided to the appropriate editorial review professional, a specific meeting planner client **102**, of the association. The call for papers **635** program control parameter rules is set up in the invention by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

Subsequent to the call for papers **635** processing, the papers and proceedings presentations **640** program control and page displays provides the attendee client **101** a process to select and list "technical/professional papers" for review that have been accepted by the editorial professionals of the association, a special type of meeting planner client **102**. Further, the official proceedings of the convention are "posted" or placed in the papers presentations and proceedings database **380** by the meeting planner client **102** for subsequent releasing to the attendee client **101**.

The cyber broadcast schedule and events **645** program control and page displays list the Internet broadcasts and provides further procession for allowing the attendee client **101** to "sign up". A registration check is made to assure proper access, based on registration policies and fees set up by the meeting planner client **102**. These cyber broadcasts use common Internet broadcast technology, however the broadcasts are specific in the invention in terms of a tie or relationship to the specific convention in the virtual convention venue databases **300**. Fees and policies concerning the attendee client **101** participation or viewing the cyber broadcast can be set up by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

An example of the "cyber broadcast" is "The Blame Excuse Defense" with Professor Alan Dershowitz hosted by the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", 8:00pm to 10:00pm EST. In this case, Professor Dershowitz presents a speech only program.

The sponsor opportunities 650 program control and page display links and branches the attendee client 101 to the exhibitor/sponsor client support - program instructions 900. The control is passed in the system with referral from the sending-specific convention including information provided by the attendee client 101 during the registration process. This process gives the attendee client 101, who may now automatically become an exhibitor/sponsor client 103, an opportunity "sign up" as an exhibitor or sponsor to the specific convention in the virtual convention venue databases 300.

Figs. 7A and 7B illustrate a sitemap flow diagram of venue-based conventions with cyber conventions with cyber exhibit booth display, and cyber sessions and forums - program instructions 700 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. In the above discussion of Fig. 5, the title of this programming area was simplified and shortened to "venue-with-cyber convention 700". The invention now allows the visitation by the attendee client 101 of a cyber-based convention that is available anytime before, during, or after a venue-based convention (e.g., Moscone Center in San Francisco). The attendee client 101 now has a wide array of specific convention information provided and activity simulated through the program instructions and the databases. It is important to again note that this programming control section, in terms of programming and displays, is only used IF there is joining or combinations of a venue-based conventions WITH cyber conventions. This provides all parties involved the ability to register and attend the venue-based convention AND/OR the cyber convention.

From the convention welcome page 701, the venue-with-cyber convention 700 program instructions provide a wide array of processing using the virtual convention venue databases 300. The convention in this programming control section is again specific and defined. "Dive down" or sub-processing within this section is limited to the specific

convention (e.g., "American Bar Association Annual Meeting on Litigation held at the Moscone Center in San Francisco) using this virtual convention venue, the attendee client 101 has several major selection choices with follow-up database query and page display processing including a convention welcome message 705, registration desk 710, exhibits 715 with display, sessions 720, forums list 725, sponsors list 730, membership 735, call for papers 740, papers and proceedings presentations 745, cyber broadcast schedule and events 750, and sponsor opportunities 755. Each of these programmed selection choices has special search and database lists, dive-down program flow control, web page display or follow-on processing capabilities as further described below.

The welcome message 705 program instructions displays from the virtual convention databases 300 the specific convention overview information such as and including a director message, welcome information, overall dates of the meeting, meeting theme, as well as venue-based convention information. The welcome message 705 logically expands to point 707 on Fig. 7B to depict the expanded role of the welcome message 705. The welcome message 705 program instructions displays from the virtual convention venue databases 300. The specific convention information would have already been set up or entered in the invention by the meeting planner client 102 through meeting planner client support - program instructions 800 (described below). Dive-down program flow control is provided to specialized convention information such as common web browser program "plug-ins & downloads" needed to assist in supporting the display and programming of the cyber convention, the cyber sessions or forums, cyber broadcast events, or cyber exhibit booth displays. Venue-based information programming on Fig. 7B includes general convention information 760, board and committee messages 765, venue-based exhibitor floor maps 770, venue-based session maps 780, and venue maps 785.

The general convention information 760 program instructions provides the attendee client 101 extensive content-type data from the virtual convention venue databases 300. This programming and content information and includes registration information and program link control, recommended dress for the venue-based convention, average temperatures at the venue-based destination, housing bureau involvement and program link control with URL links, hotel participants and accommodations with URL links, travel arrangements with URL links, CVB participants with URL links, rental car transportation with URL links, venue-based destination parking with URL links, and sponsors with URL links.

The board and committee messages 765 program instructions provide for special welcome and direction information for boards and committees of the association and organization involved in the convention.

The venue-based exhibitor floor maps 770 program instructions provide floor maps of the exhibitors (e.g., Moscone Center main floor with the layout and location of exhibitors). Exhibitor name search list processing is provided in the invention showing the location of a specific exhibitor booth on the floor.

The venue-based session maps 780 program instructions provide floor maps of the sessions and forums (e.g., Moscone Center "break out" rooms for the location of the sessions and forums). Session and forum name search list processing is provided showing the location of a specific session or forum in a break out room.

The venue maps 785 program instructions provide maps of the venue, such as the Moscone Center in San Francisco. Sponsors involved who are physically located around or outside the venue can provide location information; and, sponsor name or service type search list processing is provided showing the location of a specific sponsor (e.g., the Hyatt Hotel two blocks from the Moscone Center).

Returning to Fig. 7A, the registration desk **710** program instructions directs the attendee client **101** to register for services of the cyber OR venue-based convention. Based on registration policies and fee amounts contained in the convention venue databases **300** which are set up or loaded by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**, the attendee client **101** follows the program flow control and web page display instructions. For example, cyber exhibit booth display **715** OR the venue-based center "attendance" may be "free" or the attendee client **101** can pay via a credit card or other Internet common payment approaches. Similarly, registration policies and fee amounts with program flow control can affect "attendance" at sessions **720**, (in either cyber sessions or venue-based sessions, forums **625**, in either cyber or venue-based sessions, or other convention areas as program controlled by the registration policies and fee amount fields.

During the registration desk **710** program control, the attendee client **101** also provides interest profile information that is used in later batch processing from the past attendee direct entry from interest profiler alert generation control **560**.

The exhibits **715** program control and page displays directs the attendee client **101** to the cyber exhibit detail and booth control OR the venue-based exhibit detail and control. The exhibits **715** program control and page displays lists of the cyber exhibit booths and allows the attendee client **101** to "visit" the booths similar to the cyber exhibit booths **615** processing above. A registration check is made to assure attendee client **101** access to the booths, in the alternative, if not, branch control is provided back to the registration desk **610**. The cyber exhibit detail and booth control and page displays lists the cyber exhibit booths and allows the attendee client **101** to "visit" the booths. Search by various options is provided. The search options include a search

of only the cyber exhibit booths in the virtual convention venue databases **300** relationship-tied to the specific convention. Options include search by exhibitor name such as the "Nike®" exhibit booths at this convention, by subject search such as the "sporting goods" exhibit booths at this convention, or by key word(s) such as "ice hockey gloves" at this convention.

However, in this exhibits **715** program control and page displays area, the venue-based exhibit detail is also displayed from the virtual convention venue databases **300**. This allows the attendee client **101** to search and list the various exhibitors at the venue-based convention such as the "sporting goods" exhibitors at the Moscone Center at the venue-based convention. Program link control is provided from the venue-based exhibit detail and control to the venue-based exhibitor floor maps **770**.

The sessions **720** and forums **725** program control and page displays list the cyber and venue-based sessions or forums and allows the attendee client **101** to "join". A registration check is made to assure proper access, based on registration policies and fees set up by the meeting planner client **102**. These cyber and venue-based sessions and forums are specific to the convention, and are related/tied in the database. The sessions and forums are set up or loaded into the invention virtual convention venue databases **300** by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800** further described below. The sessions **720** and forums **725** program control for the cyber sessions and forums is the same as described in the above cyber sessions **620** and cyber forums **625** program control and page displays. The venue-based sessions or forums detail and control processing allows the attendee client **101** to also search and list the various sessions or forums presented at the venue-based convention. Registration branch program control is provided.

The sponsors list 730 is similar to the above described sponsors list 630 program control and page displays lists of the special sponsors of the convention. These sponsors are specific to the convention, and are related/tied in the virtual convention venue databases 300. The sponsors are set up or loaded by the meeting planner client 102 in meeting planner client support-program instructions 800. The sponsors list 730 processing includes venue-based sponsor information and program processing which is link-depicted at 708 on Fig. 7B-linking to the general convention information 760 program control.

The membership 735 program control and page display directs the attendee client 101 to "join" the association that is holding the specific convention. A wide selection of association membership-type information from the virtual convention venue databases 300 is provided. Become a member 736 program control and processing is similar to the registration desk 610 program; links are provided. Membership fees and policies concerning the attendee client 101 joining the association is set up by the meeting planner client 102 in meeting planner client support - program instructions 800.

The call for papers 740 and subsequent papers and proceedings presentations 745 program control and page displays are identical to the processing described in detail above in call for papers 635 and papers and proceedings presentations 640. However, the "technical paper" presented by the professional, attendee client 101, can also be viewed by the editorial committee for potential presentation at the venue-based convention. Also, the "proceedings" of the venue-based convention can be "posted" by the meeting planner client 102.

The cyber broadcast schedule and events 750 program control is identical to the processing described in detail above in cyber broadcast schedule and events 645 and is depicted here to show the inclusion with the "venue-with-cyber convention 700".

The sponsor opportunities 755 program control is identical to the processing described in detail above in sponsor opportunities 650, and is depicted here to show the inclusion with the "venue-with-cyber convention 700".

Fig. 8 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the meeting planner client support-program instructions 800 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The system now allows the prospective meeting planner client 102 to review a sales demonstration of a fully loaded "showcase sample" virtual convention. The system then provides the meeting planner client 102 the dive-down program flow control to initially load and later change the control parameter rules and content information into the virtual convention venue databases 300 for each specific convention. The parameter rules and content information supports the "100% cyber-based convention 600", the "venue-with-cyber convention 700", and the fees and policies used in the exhibitor/sponsor client support - program instructions 900.

Similar to the meetings for professional work with physical convention centers (e.g., venue-based centers) in the convention industry, the meeting planner client 102 has significant control of specific "conventions" (e.g., standard conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings) in the virtual convention venue invention. Further interpretation on meeting planners work can be obtained from Meeting Professionals International "MPI" located in Dallas, TX. The meeting planner client support - program instructions 800 in terms of the meeting planner client 102 was described in the Fig. 6 detail discussions above: welcome message 605, registration desk 610, cyber exhibit booths 615, cyber sessions 620, cyber forums 625, sponsors list 630, call for papers 635, papers and proceedings presentations 640, and cyber broadcast schedule and events 645. Further, the meeting planner client support-program instructions 800 in terms of the meeting planner client 102

was also described in the Figs. 7A and 7B detail discussions above: welcome message 705, registration desk 710, exhibits 715, sessions 720, forums 725, sponsors list 730, membership 735, call for papers 740, papers and proceedings presentations 745, cyber broadcast schedule and events 750, general convention information 760, board and committee messages 765, venue-based exhibitor floor maps 770, venue-based session maps 780, and venue maps 785.

The meeting planner site inspection 805 program instructions process provides controlled query of the virtual convention venue databases 300 and allows the prospective meeting planner client 102 to review a sales demonstration of fully loaded samples of virtual conventions. These samples include meetings and conventions from both the "100% cyber-based convention 600" and the "venue-with-cyber convention 700" program processes.

The meeting planner services 810 program instructions provides the meeting planner client 102 the dive-down program flow control to initially load and later change the control parameter rules and content information into the virtual convention venue databases 300 for each specific convention. The meeting planner services 810 program instructions address both the "100% cyber-based convention 600" and the "venue-with-cyber convention 700" control parameter rules and content information. A meeting planner welcome 815 program provides the various policies and fee options of the virtual convention venue processes. Next, a site inspection as described at point 805 above is provided if the prospect meeting planner client 102 missed such a "showcase" review of the invention.

The sign-up your association and meetings 825 program instructions provide all processing to initially load and later change the control parameter rules and content information into the virtual convention venue databases 300 for each specific convention. After a password is given by the webmaster, the meeting planner

client 102 can contract pursuant to, for example, an agreement between the website host organization and the meeting planner association or corporation) for services on the virtual convention venue invention. The meeting planner client 102 can then load all details and content. The details and content are requested through a series of submission forms and subsequent receipt by the program including:

- convention processing flow control parameters,
- convention content information,
- exhibitor/sponsor registration edit criteria parameters,
- exhibitor client booth criteria and control parameters,
- attendee registration edit criteria parameters,
- sessions and forums processing flow control parameters,
- sessions and forums content information,
- call for papers processing flow control parameters,
- paper presentation content information,
- meeting proceedings content information,
- cyber broadcast processing flow control parameters, and
- broadcast schedule and event content information.

The meeting planner can also load potential exhibitor and sponsor contacts for further sales efforts by the website host organization.

The paper for presentation and proceedings presentation control 830 program instructions provide all processing for meeting planner clients 102 who are assigned specific technical editor responsibilities (by the association) for the paper review and approval for presentation. This program area includes review of all papers that have been submitted by attendee clients 101, post editor comments, and approval-marking the paper for

inclusion in through the paper presentations 640 and 745 program instructions. Further, the meeting planner client 102 can also "post" or load on the paper presentations and proceedings database 380 the "official" proceedings of the convention.

Fig. 9 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the exhibitor/sponsor client support - program instructions 900 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The exhibitor and sponsor services 905 program instructions now allow the prospective exhibitor/sponsor client 103 to review a sales demonstration of a fully loaded "showcase sample" of exhibitor booths. The system then provides the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 the dive-down program flow control to initially select and order the booth style, choose various decorator services, and then build the "panels", in Figs. 10A-10J using common Internet advertising ad banner sizes and later change, using information provided by exhibitor/sponsor client 103, the exhibit booths and sponsor level support in the virtual convention venue databases 300 for one or many conventions. "One or many" is used here in the invention to specify the capability of the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 to place an exhibit booth order across multiple conventions in the virtual convention venue databases 300. This is further described below.

The exhibitor/sponsor welcome 910 program control and page displays provide the various policies and fee options associated to the potential exhibitor and sponsors of the virtual convention venue processes. The information presented to the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 in this programming area includes the policies and fees, such as sponsor level "packages", set forth in the virtual convention venue databases 300 for each selected meeting and convention.

The demonstration of sample exhibitor booths 915 program instructions presents a fully loaded "showcase sample" of exhibitor booths released to an

exhibitor/sponsor on request. The standard styles illustrated in Figs 10A-10J are demonstrated as well as other styles used by exhibitors in the past.

The sign-up your company 920 program instructions provide all the form pages necessary for the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 to sign-up or register for specific conventions. Available here is an agreement between the website host organization representing the meeting planner association or corporation, and the exhibitor/sponsor for services on the virtual convention venue invention. Also, venue-based registration or sign-up processing is provided. All information is written in the virtual convention venue databases 300.

The booth decorator services 925 program instructions provide the capabilities to order the website host organization to assist with the technical aspects of the exhibitor booth. Decorator services is used here similar to the convention industry. The website host organization can offer a wide array of services such as digital photography, scanning, signage and other communication-type services to assist in assuring the exhibitor booth meets the needs of the exhibitor/sponsor client 103.

The exhibitor and sponsor opportunities 930 program instructions includes branch link control of the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 to meetings search by various criteria, place exhibit order dive-down process, or place sponsor orders.

The meetings search by various criteria 935 program instructions provide the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 the ability to "select" a specific convention OR "select" across multiple conventions. For example, exhibitor/sponsor "Pepsi-Cola® Company" may want to exhibit and sponsor across all "sports" related conventions based upon terms in a master purchase agreement. Reiterating, a convention in the invention is defined as a standard convention, event, conference, trade show or meeting held

at the virtual convention venue in terms of the programs and databases described herein.

The place exhibit orders **940** program instructions includes a "building process" of the exhibit booth and permits the exhibitor sponsor to provide booth design/content information. Programming steps include pick-a-booth, pick-a-show, pick-a-content-level, and pricing calculator with payment processing. The pricing of the exhibit booths is based on all of these criteria. As an example, a 25 page brochure behind one button on a cyber exhibit booth may be more expensive than one simple digital picture which requires less storage, because pricing may be content-based.

The place sponsor orders **950** program instructions provide the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** the ability to order and contract for special exposure services during the virtual convention venue processes. In the conventions industry, the sponsors are usually "higher up" than exhibitors with their underwriting activities of the convention. This usually means sponsors receive greater exposure than the exhibitors and receive the best cyber exhibit booth size, package deals, preferred locations, etc. This process area includes the various option controls, rotating welcome ad banners, session introduction advertising, and special recognition.

Figs. 10A-10J illustrate 10 sample exhibit booth displays used in screen views and made from common Internet advertising ad banner sizes in accordance with this invention. The "exhibits" or "exhibit booths" used in the invention are made up of "panels" and arranged to appear similar to physical display booths used in the convention industry. The panels are the common Internet advertising ad banner sizes including full banner, full banner with vertical navigation bar, half banner, square banner, vertical banner, button #1, button #2, and micro button. Each panel can also represent a major display venue, where each panel can bridge the attendee client **101** to various

promotional page venues such as the full exhibitor brochure, multiple and rotating digital photos of products, or video clips.

The attendee client **101** can click on any and all panels. Registration information is also provided to exhibitors and sponsor clients **103** enabling them to seek follow-up sales with the attendee client **101**. This information may or may not be made known to the attendee client **101**.

Because the common Internet advertising ad banner sizes are used, it is important to note that an open-ended number of booth styles can be made up. Also, advertising industry standard ABC and BPA International audit measurement is tracked in the virtual convention venue databases **300** concerning attendee client **101** visits at the booth or click-throughs from the panels for later reporting to the exhibitor/sponsor client **103**, or for billing purposes. Fees and policies concerning the attendee client **101** visit measurement and billing of the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** can be set up by the meeting planner client 102 in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

Conclusion

The description of the invention set forth herein is illustrative, and does not limit the scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims. Variations and modifications of the embodiments disclosed herein are possible. For example, various web browser computer or "information appliance" types, various web browser software programs, various real-time communications protocols, various relational database systems, and various website programming languages may be used. Also, the programming method steps set forth are presented to the reader from a linear or sequential-explanation viewpoint for best understanding; in the invention the steps are quasi-reentrant (e.g., good website application programs are written to "start" almost anywhere). Finally, the various

convention content and control parameter fields can have an unlimited number of programmer definitions and are also not meant to be limited. These and other variations and modifications of the embodiments disclosed herein may be made without departing from the spirit of the invention and from the scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for conducting at least one convention, by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client comprising the steps of:

a. receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions;

b. receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions; and

c. releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

2. The method according to claim 1 wherein the at least one meeting planner client is a plurality of meeting planner clients.

3. The method according to claim 1 wherein the at least one attendee client is a plurality of attendee clients.

4. The method according to claim 1 wherein the convention content information is cyber-based.

5. The method according to claim 1 wherein the convention content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

6. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of storing in a relational database cross-referencing fields from the meeting planner client to allow for the holding of an unlimited number of conventions.

7. The method according to claim 1 further comprising, prior to step b), the steps of receiving at the central website a search request from the attendee client for certain convention content information and releasing to the attendee client information satisfying the search request.

8. The method according to claim 1 further comprising, prior to step c), the steps of receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the convention.

9. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of using attendee client information to alert attendee clients of future conventions that may be of interest to them.

10. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website, from at least one exhibitor client, convention search, selection and registration information for at least one convention.

11. The method according to claim 10 wherein the at least one exhibitor client is a plurality of exhibitor clients.

12. The method according to claim 10 further comprising the step of storing cross-referencing fields from the convention content information in a relational database to allow an unlimited number of exhibitor clients.

13. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the meeting planner client session content information.

14. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the steps of receiving at the central website a request for certain client session content information from the attendee client for and releasing to the attendee client information satisfying the search request.

15. The method according to claim 14 wherein the session content information is cyber-based.

16. The method according to claim 14 wherein the session content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

17. The method according to claim 14 further comprising the step of providing attendee client participation in the session.

18. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website a search request from the attendee client for session information and releasing to the attendee client such information.

19. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the session.

20. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from an exhibitor client exhibit content information including exhibit booth design and content.

21. The method according to claim 20 wherein the exhibit content information is cyber-based.

22. The method according to claim 20 wherein the exhibit content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

23. The method according to claim 20 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the attendee client an exhibit booth selection.

24. The method according to claim 23 further comprising the step of releasing to the attendee client exhibit booth design and content.

25. The method according to claim 23 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the exhibit booth selection.

26. The method according to claim 20 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the attendee client a search request for certain exhibit booth design and content and releasing to the attendee client information satisfying the search.

27. The method according to claim 20 wherein the at least one exhibitor client is a plurality of exhibitor clients.

28. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the meeting planner paper presentation content information.

29. The method according to claim 28 wherein the paper presentation content information is cyber-based.

30. The method according to claim 28 wherein the paper presentation content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

31. The method according to claim 28 further comprising the step of releasing to the attendee client paper presentation content information.

32. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the meeting planner meeting proceedings content information.

33. The method according to claim 32 wherein the meeting proceedings content information is cyber-based.

34. The method according to claim 32 wherein the meeting proceedings content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

35. The method according to claim 32 further comprising the step of releasing to the attendee client meeting proceedings content information.

36. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the meeting planner cyber broadcast content information.

37. The method according to claim 36 further comprising the step of releasing to the attendee client cyber broadcast content information.

38. The method according to claim 1 wherein a plurality of conventions are facilitated from the central website.

39. A method for conducting at least one convention, by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client comprising the steps of:

a) receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions;

b) receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions;

c) receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the convention; and

d) releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

40. A system for conducting at least one convention, by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client comprising:

a. means for receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and means for electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions;

b. means for receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions; and

c. means for releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

41. The system according to claim 40 further comprising means for receiving at the central website, from at least one exhibitor client, convention search, selection and registration information for at least one convention.

42. The system according to claim 40 further comprising means for receiving at the central website from an exhibitor client exhibit content information including exhibit booth design and content.

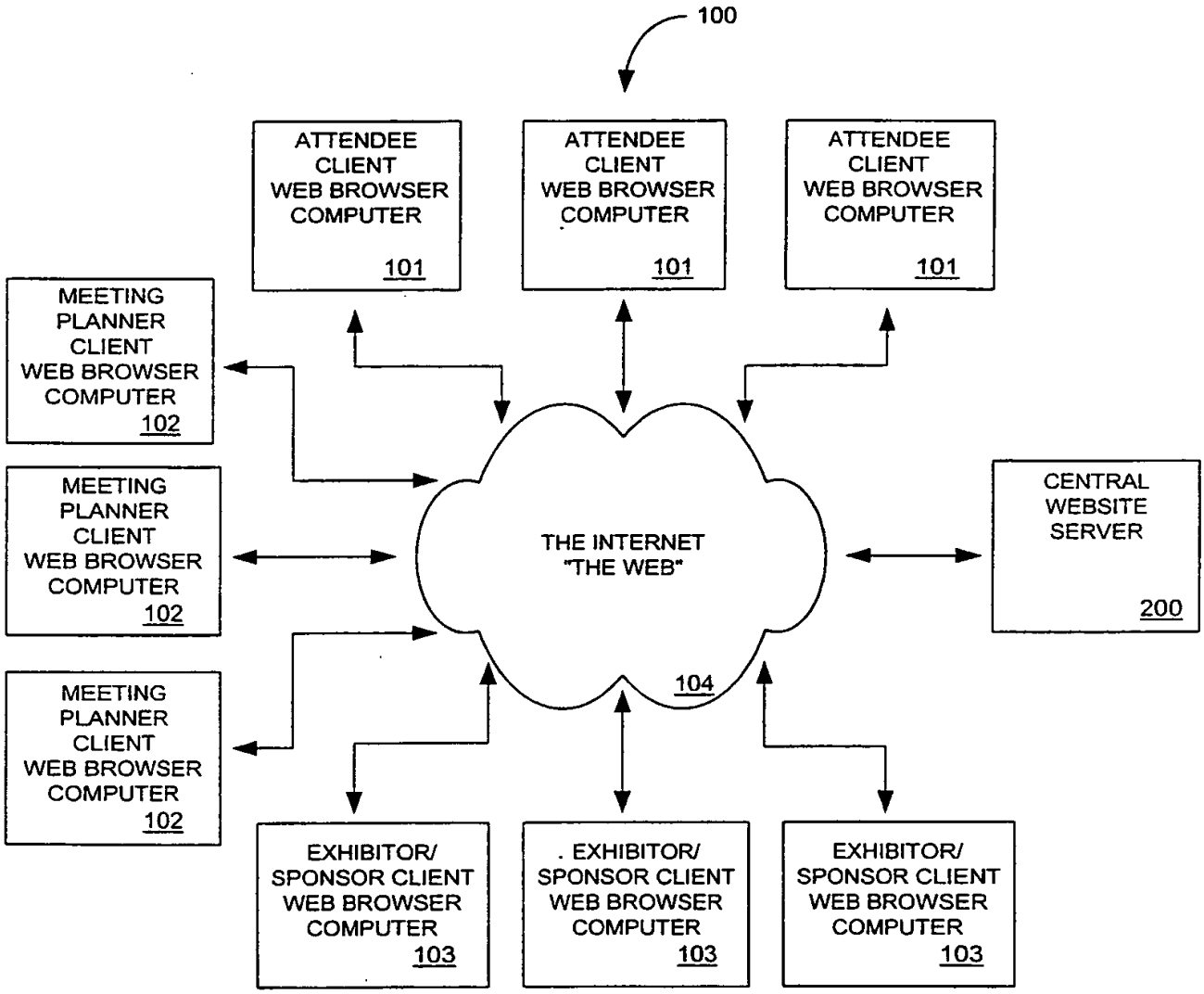

100
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 101
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 101
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 101
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 102
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 102
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 102
THE INTERNET "THE WEB"
104
CENTRAL WEBSITE SERVER 200
EXHIBITOR/ SPONSOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 103
EXHIBITOR/ SPONSOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 103
EXHIBITOR/ SPONSOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER COMPUTER 103

FIGURE 1

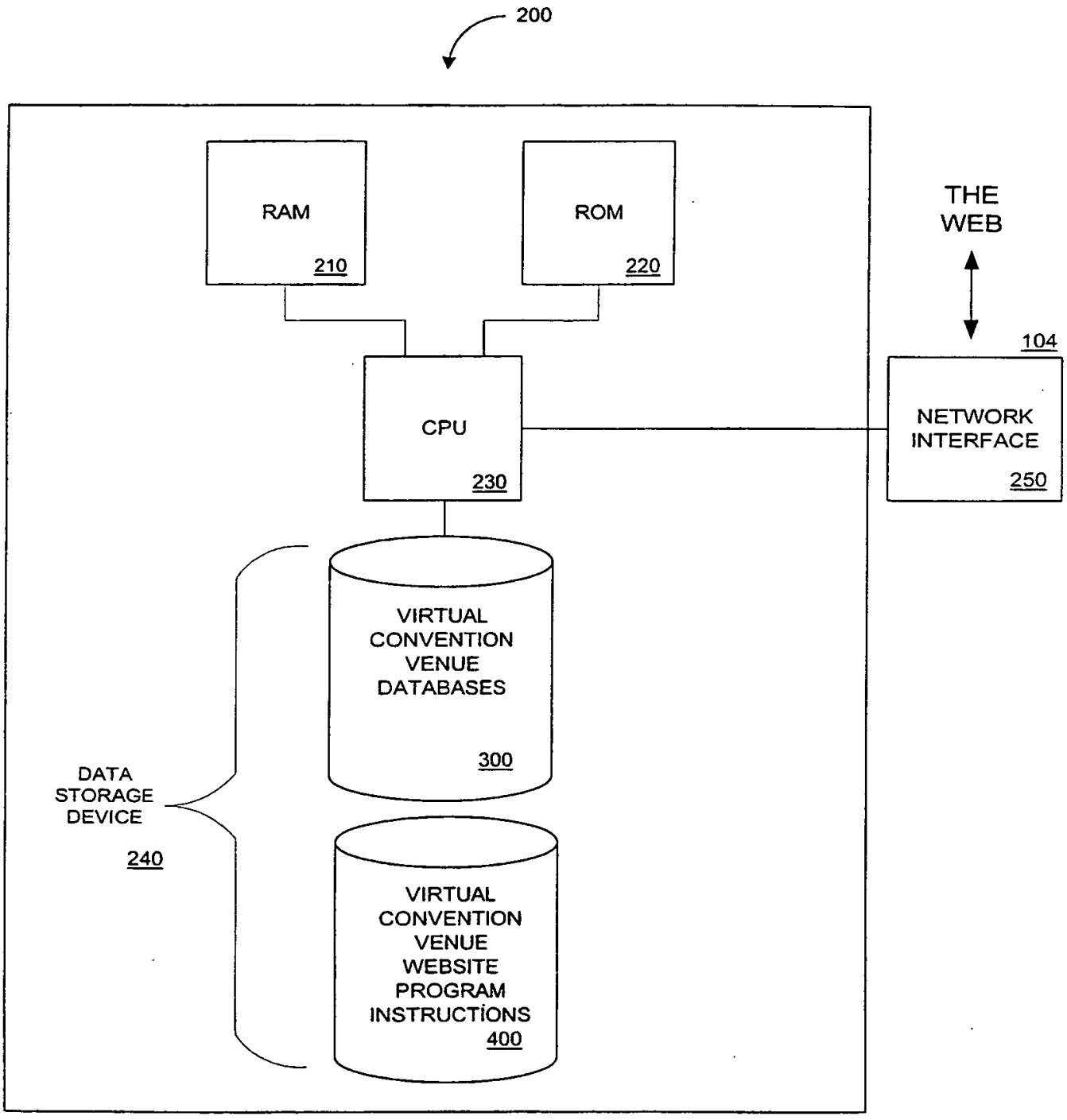

200
RAM
210
ROM
220
THE WEB
104
CPU
230
NETWORK INTERFACE
250
VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE DATABASES
300
DATA STORAGE DEVICE
240
VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE WEBSITE PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
400

FIGURE 2

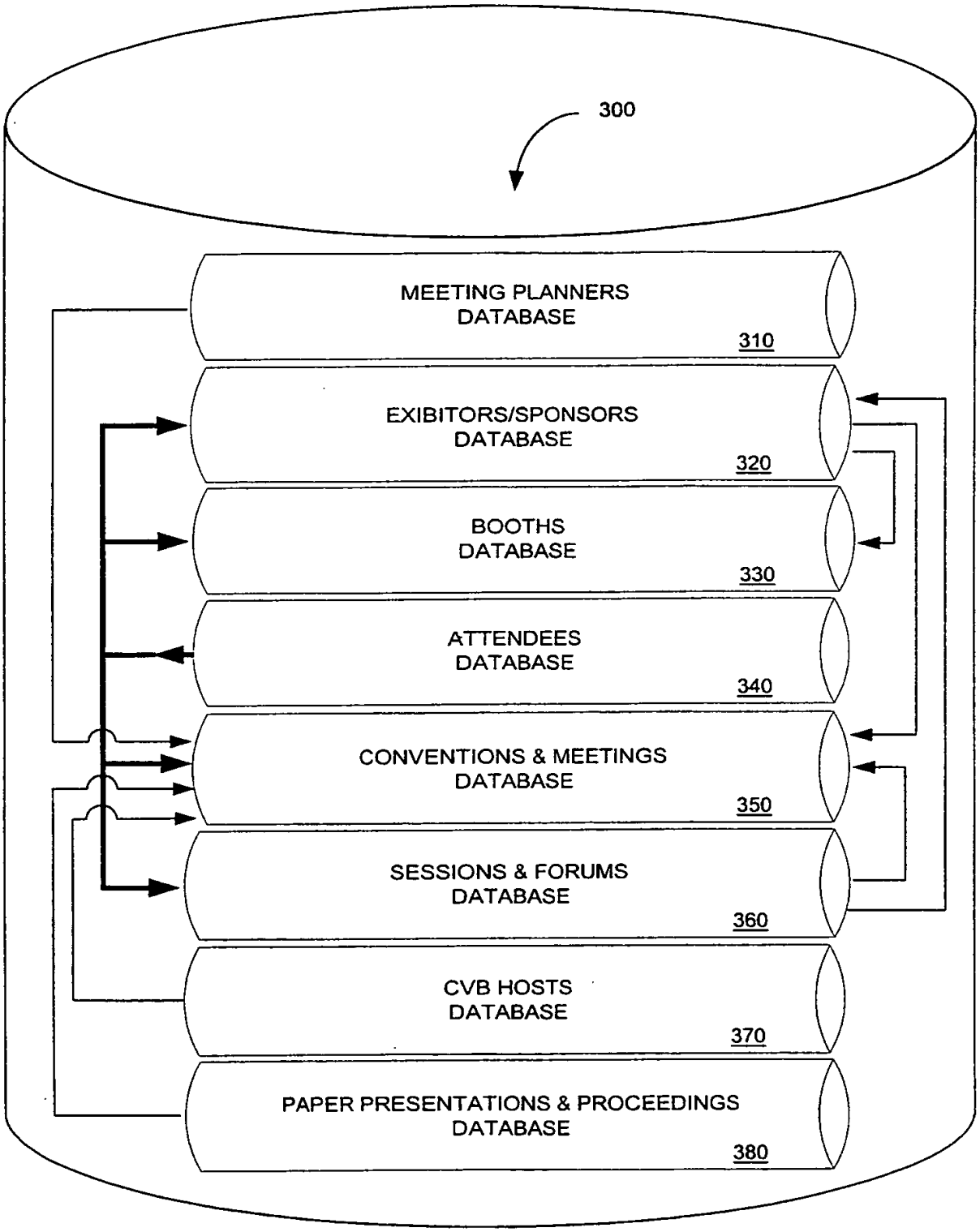

300
MEETING PLANNERS DATABASE
310
EXIBITORS/SPONSORS DATABASE
320
BOOTHS DATABASE
330
ATTENDEES DATABASE
340
CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS DATABASE
350
SESSIONS & FORUMS DATABASE
360
CVB HOSTS DATABASE
370
PAPER PRESENTATIONS & PROCEEDINGS DATABASE
380

FIGURE 3

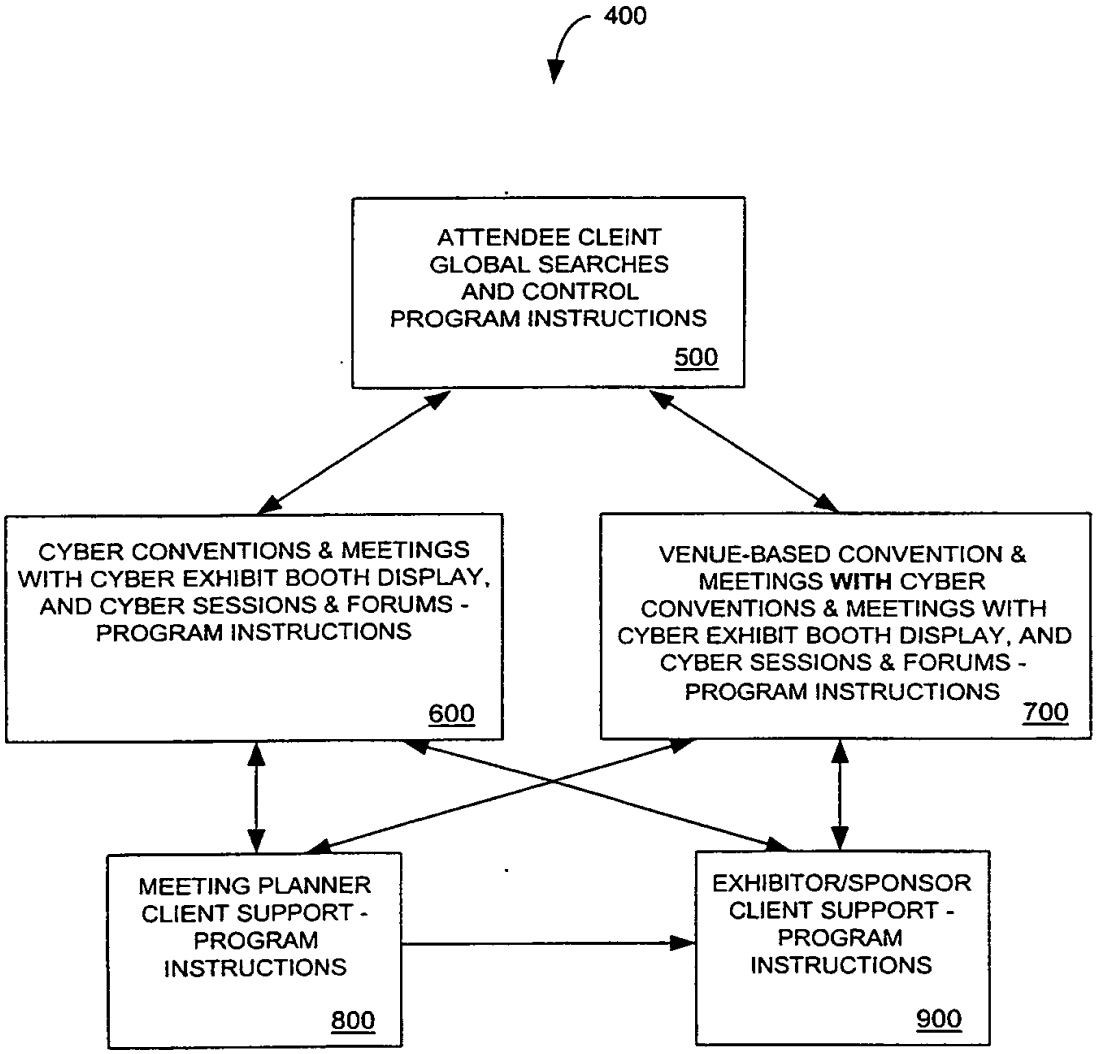

400
ATTENDEE CLEINT GLOBAL SEARCHES AND CONTROL PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
500
CYBER CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS WITH CYBER EXHIBIT BOOTH DISPLAY, AND CYBER SESSIONS & FORUMS - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
600
VENUE-BASED CONVENTION & MEETINGS WITH CYBER CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS WITH CYBER EXHIBIT BOOTH DISPLAY, AND CYBER SESSIONS & FORUMS - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
700
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT SUPPORT - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
800
EXHIBITOR/SPONSOR CLIENT SUPPORT - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
900

FIGURE 4

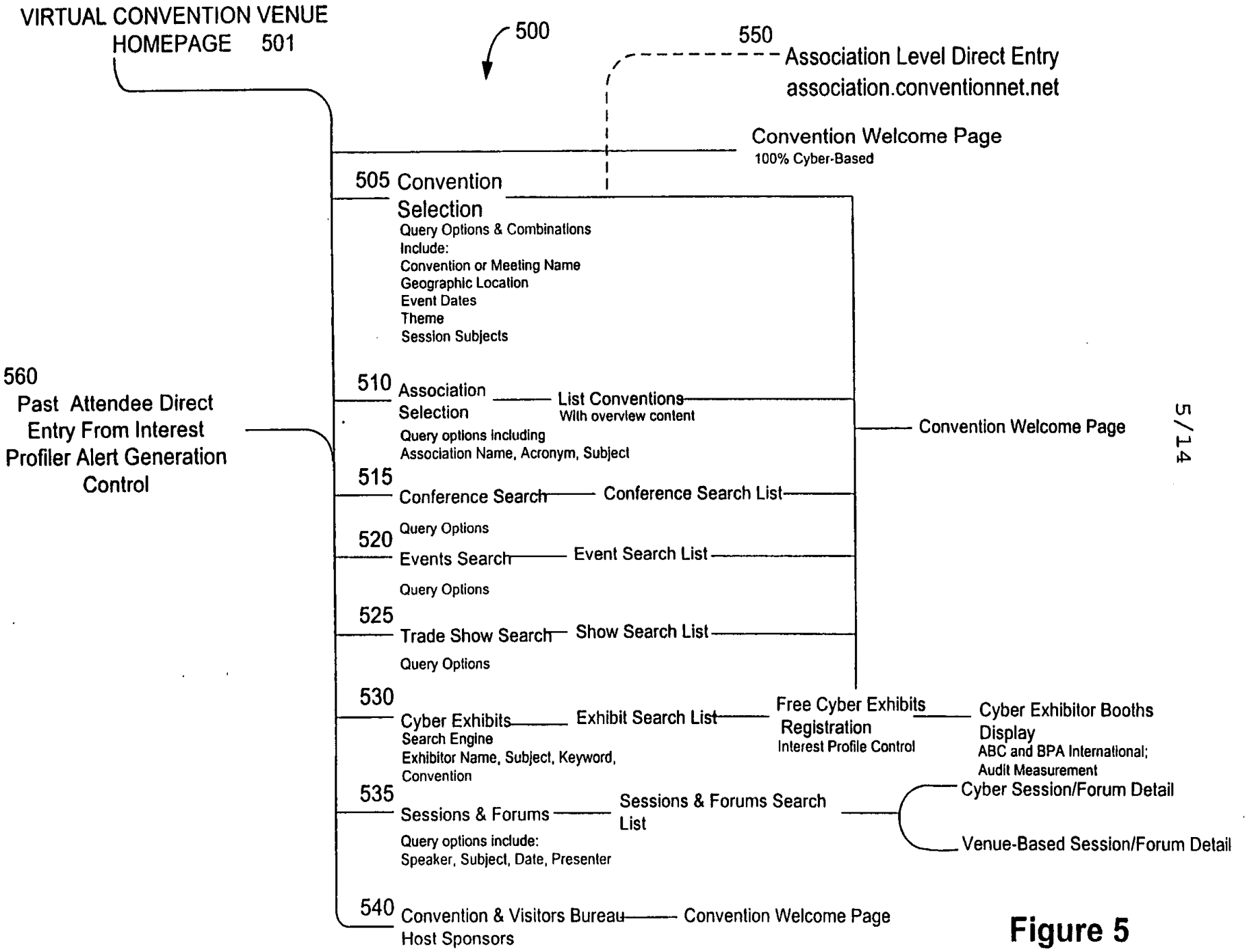

VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE HOMEPAGE 501
500
550
Association Level Direct Entry
association.conventionnet.net
Convention Welcome Page
100% Cyber-Based
505 Convention Selection
Query Options & Combinations
Include:
Convention or Meeting Name
Geographic Location
Event Dates
Theme
Session Subjects
560
Past Attendee Direct Entry From Interest Profiler Alert Generation Control
510 Association Selection
List Conventions
With overview content
Query options including
Association Name, Acronym, Subject
Convention Welcome Page
515 Conference Search
Conference Search List
Query Options
520 Events Search
Event Search List
Query Options
525 Trade Show Search
Show Search List
Query Options
530 Cyber Exhibits
Search Engine
Exhibit Search List
Free Cyber Exhibits Registration
Interest Profile Control
Cyber Exhibitor Booths Display
ABC and BPA International;
Audit Measurement
Exhibitor Name, Subject, Keyword, Convention
535 Sessions & Forums
Sessions & Forums Search List
Cyber Session/Forum Detail
Venue-Based Session/Forum Detail
Query options include:
Speaker, Subject, Date, Presenter
540 Convention & Visitors Bureau
Host Sponsors
Convention Welcome Page

Figure 5

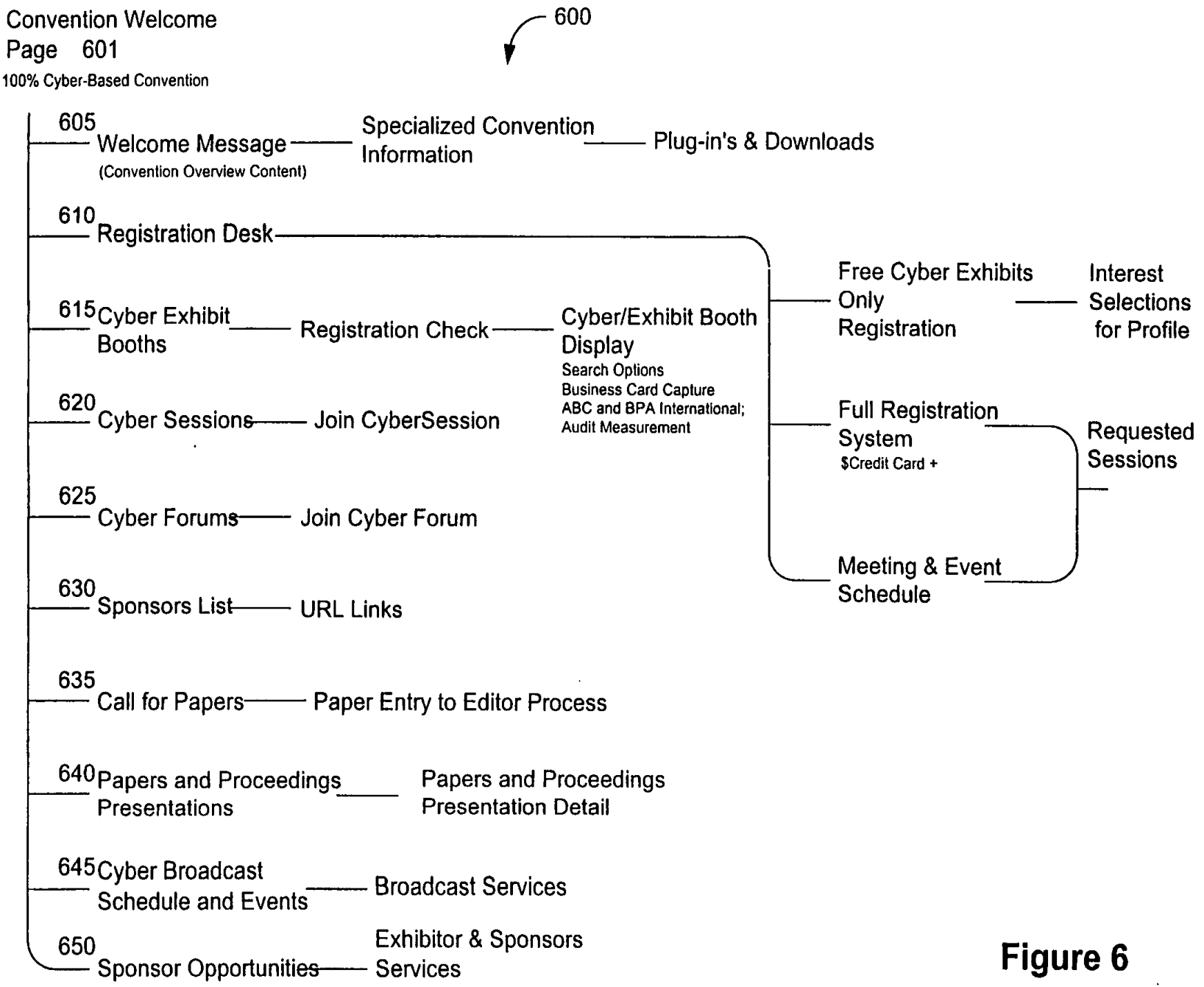

Convention Welcome
Page 601
100% Cyber-Based Convention
600
605
Welcome Message
(Convention Overview Content)
Specialized Convention Information
Plug-in's & Downloads
610
Registration Desk
615
Cyber Exhibit Booths
Registration Check
Cyber/Exhibit Booth Display
Search Options
Business Card Capture
ABC and BPA International; Audit Measurement
620
Cyber Sessions
Join CyberSession
625
Cyber Forums
Join Cyber Forum
630
Sponsors List
URL Links
635
Call for Papers
Paper Entry to Editor Process
640
Papers and Proceedings Presentations
Papers and Proceedings Presentation Detail
645
Cyber Broadcast Schedule and Events
Broadcast Services
650
Sponsor Opportunities
Exhibitor & Sponsors Services
Free Cyber Exhibits Only Registration
Interest Selections for Profile
Full Registration System
$Credit Card +
Requested Sessions
Meeting & Event Schedule

Figure 6

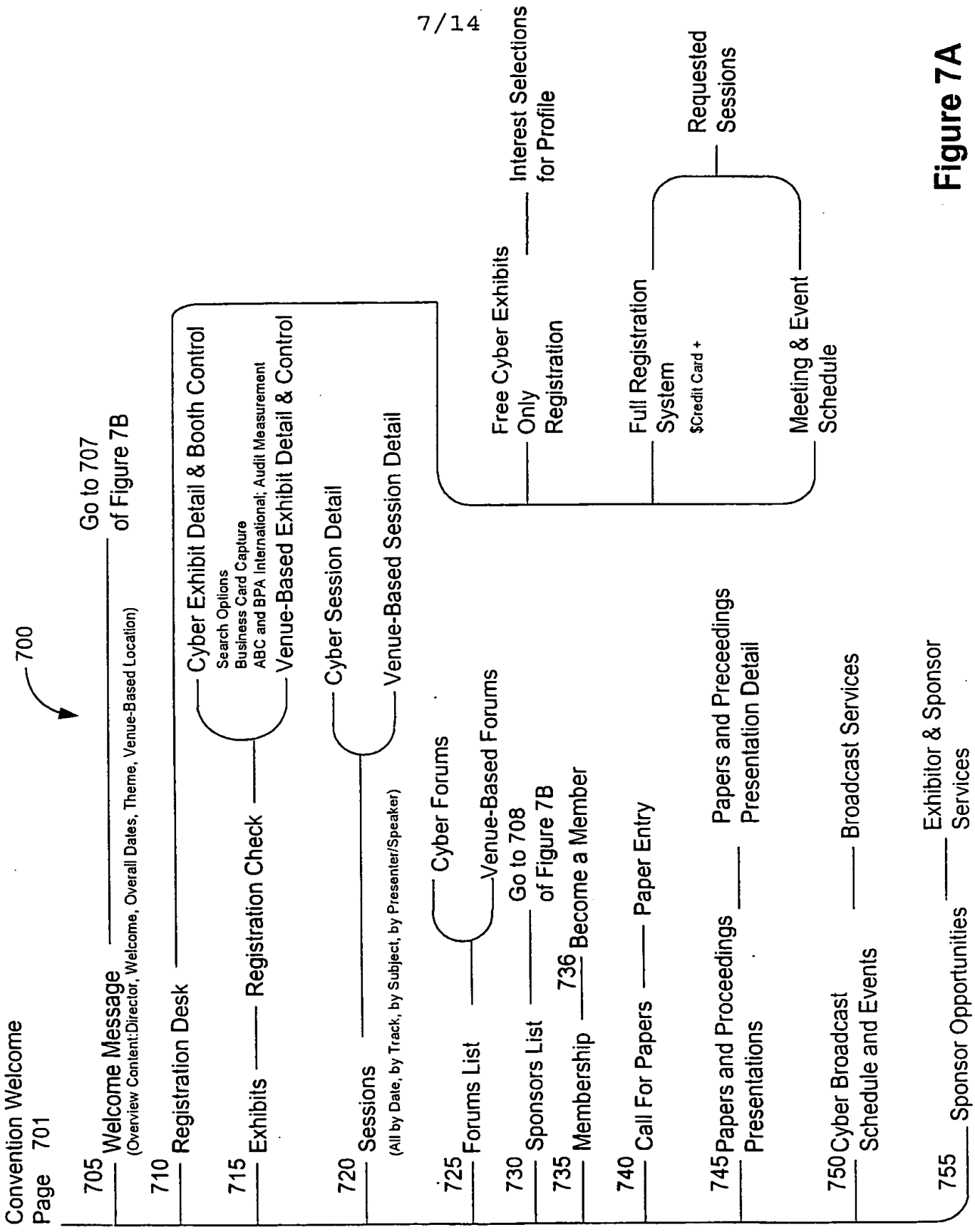

Convention Welcome Page 701
700
705 Welcome Message
(Overview Content:Director, Welcome, Overall Dates, Theme, Venue-Based Location)
Go to 707 of Figure 7B
710 Registration Desk
715 Exhibits
Cyber Exhibit Detail & Booth Control
Search Options
Business Card Capture
ABC and BPA International; Audit Measurement
Registration Check
Venue-Based Exhibit Detail & Control
720 Sessions
(All by Date, by Track, by Subject, by Presenter/Speaker)
Cyber Session Detail
Venue-Based Session Detail
725 Forums List
Cyber Forums
Venue-Based Forums
730 Sponsors List
Go to 708 of Figure 7B
735 Membership
736 Become a Member
740 Call For Papers
Paper Entry
745 Papers and Proceedings
Presentations
Papers and Preceedings
Presentation Detail
750 Cyber Broadcast
Schedule and Events
Broadcast Services
755 Sponsor Opportunities
Exhibitor & Sponsor
Services
Free Cyber Exhibits
Only
Registration
Interest Selections
for Profile
Full Registration
System
$Credit Card +
Requested
Sessions
Meeting & Event
Schedule

Figure 7A

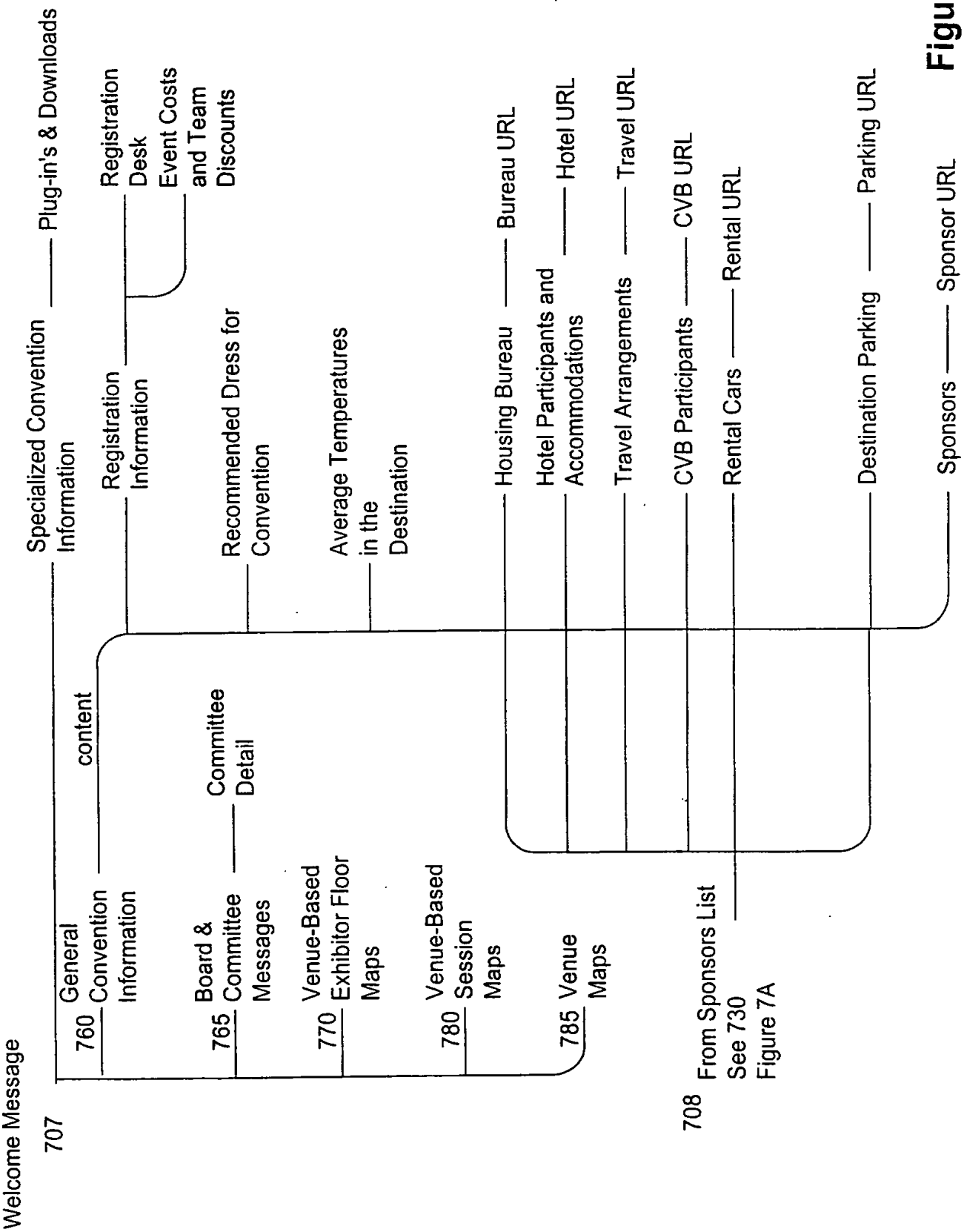

Welcome Message
707
Specialized Convention Information
Plug-in's & Downloads
760 General Convention Information
content
Registration Information
Registration Desk
Event Costs and Team Discounts
Recommended Dress for Convention
Average Temperatures in the Destination
765 Board & Committee Messages
Committee Detail
770 Venue-Based Exhibitor Floor Maps
780 Venue-Based Session Maps
785 Venue Maps
Housing Bureau
Bureau URL
Hotel Participants and Accommodations
Hotel URL
Travel Arrangements
Travel URL
CVB Participants
CVB URL
Rental Cars
Rental URL
Destination Parking
Parking URL
Sponsors
Sponsor URL
708 From Sponsors List See 730 Figure 7A

Figure 7B

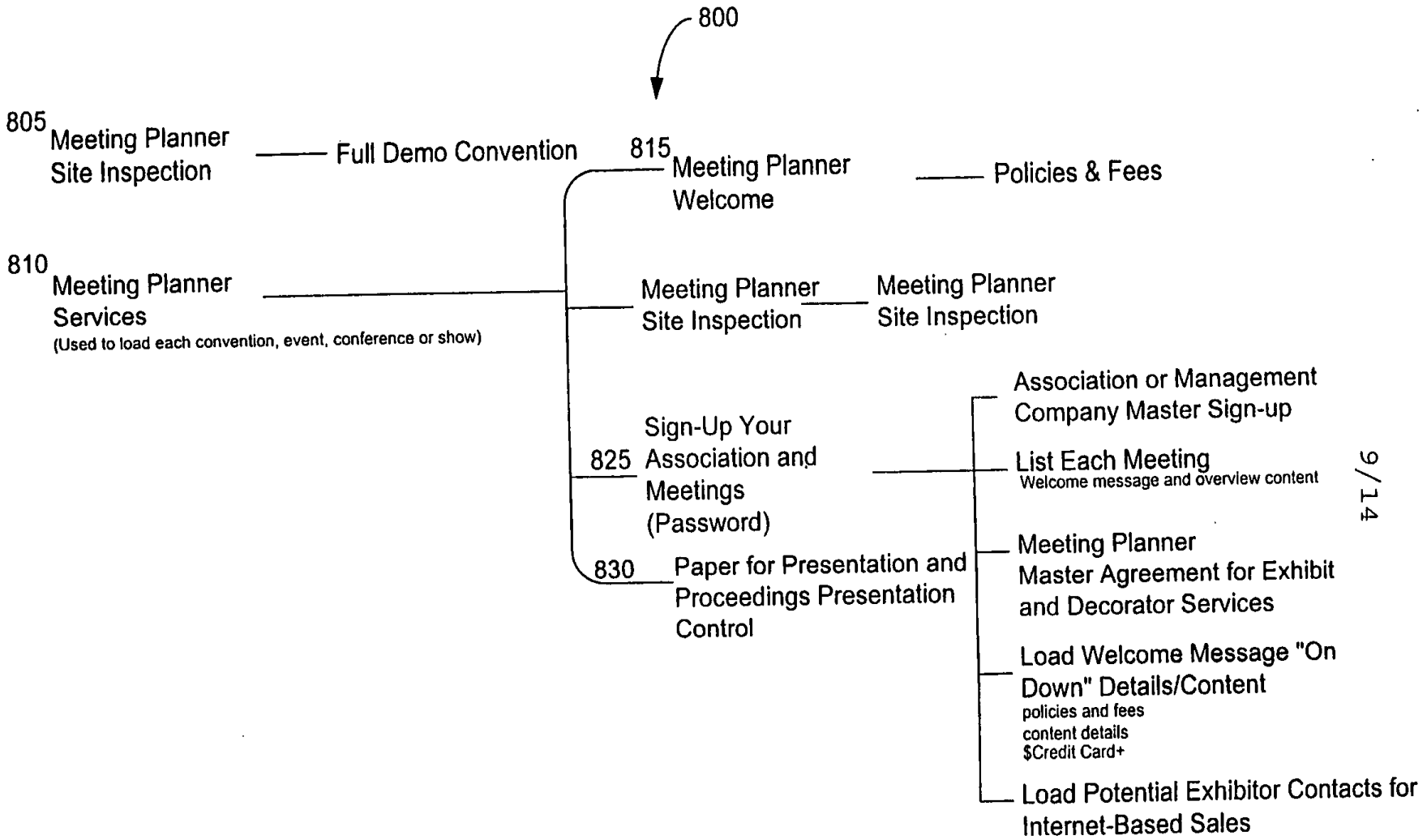

800
805
Meeting Planner
Site Inspection
Full Demo Convention
815
Meeting Planner
Welcome
Policies & Fees
810
Meeting Planner
Services
(Used to load each convention, event, conference or show)
Meeting Planner
Site Inspection
Meeting Planner
Site Inspection
Association or Management
Company Master Sign-up
Sign-Up Your
825
Association and
Meetings
(Password)
List Each Meeting
Welcome message and overview content
Meeting Planner
Master Agreement for Exhibit
and Decorator Services
830
Paper for Presentation and
Proceedings Presentation
Control
Load Welcome Message "On
Down" Details/Content
policies and fees
content details
$Credit Card+
Load Potential Exhibitor Contacts for
Internet-Based Sales

Figure 8

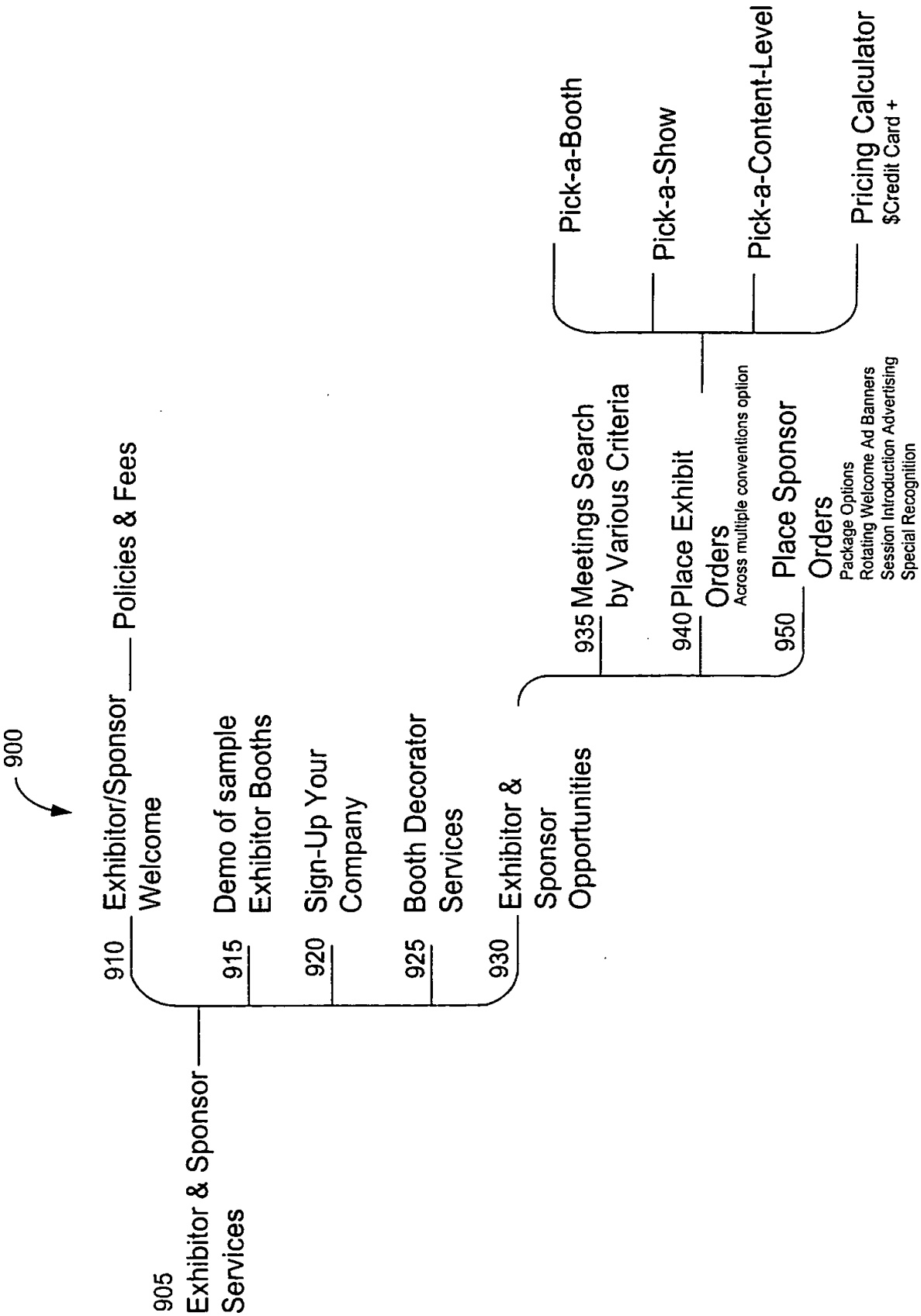

900
905 Exhibitor & Sponsor Services
910 Exhibitor/Sponsor Welcome
Policies & Fees
915 Demo of sample Exhibitor Booths
920 Sign-Up Your Company
925 Booth Decorator Services
930 Exhibitor & Sponsor Opportunities
935 Meetings Search by Various Criteria
940 Place Exhibit Orders
Across multiple conventions option
950 Place Sponsor Orders
Package Options
Rotating Welcome Ad Banners
Session Introduction Advertising
Special Recognition
Pick-a-Booth
Pick-a-Show
Pick-a-Content-Level
Pricing Calculator
$Credit Card +

Figure 9

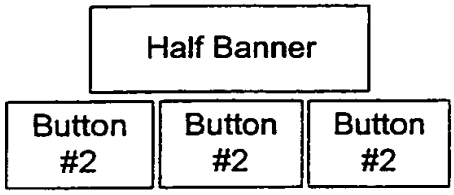


FIGURE 10A

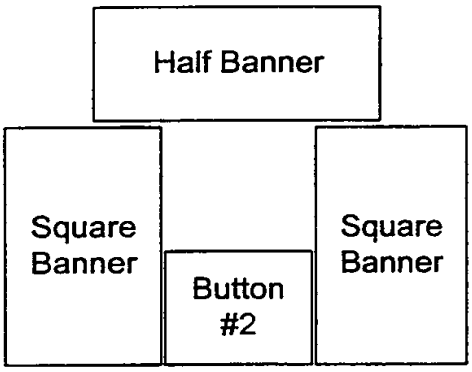


FIGURE 10B

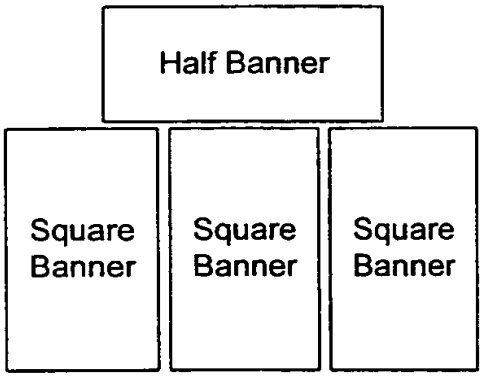


FIGURE 10C

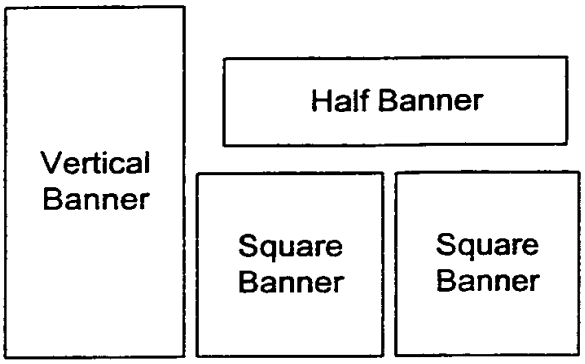


FIGURE 10D

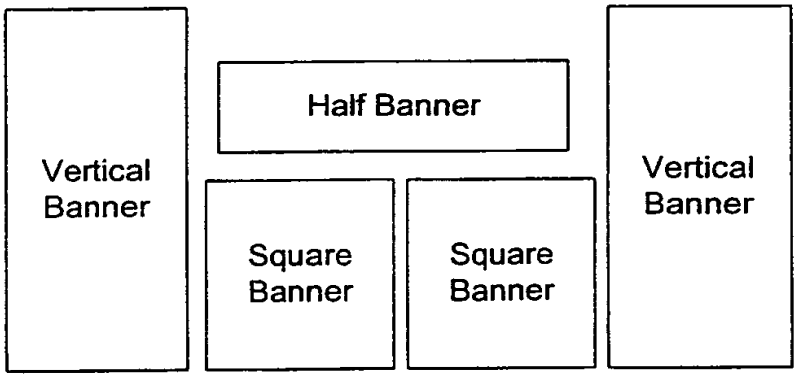


FIGURE 10E

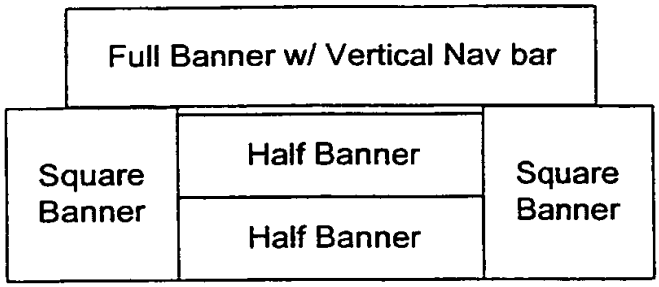


FIGURE 10F

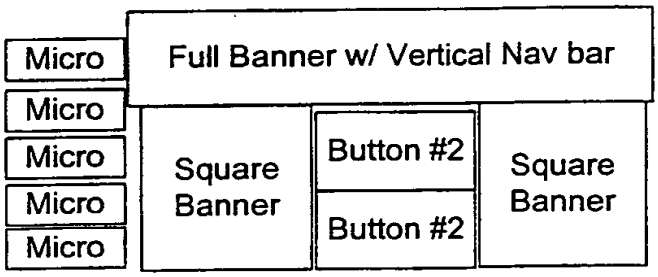


FIGURE 10G

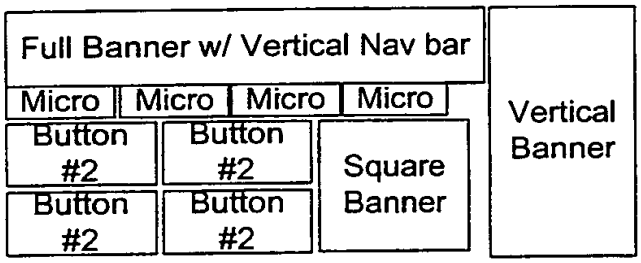


FIGURE 10H

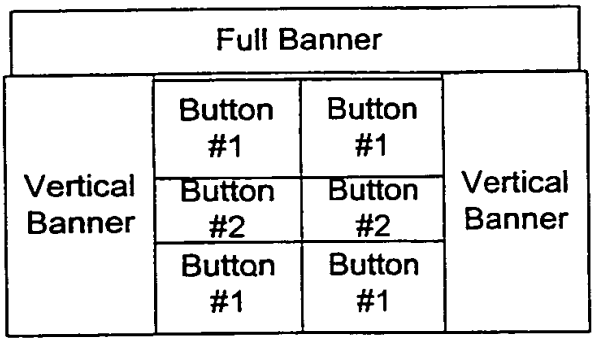


FIGURE 10I

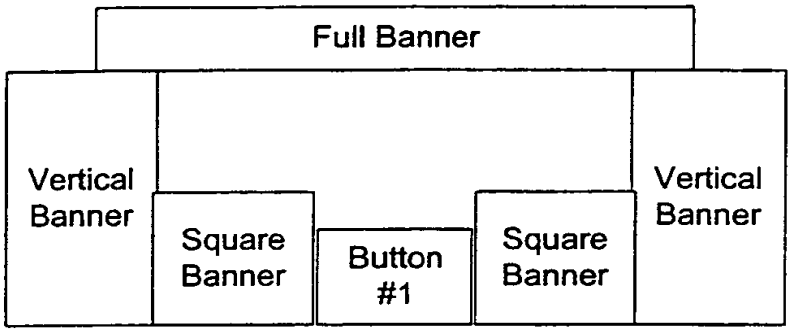

Full Banner
Vertical Banner
Square Banner
Button #1
Square Banner
Vertical Banner

FIGURE 10J

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US99/31285

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) :G06F 15/00, 15/16
US CL :709/203, 204, 205

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 709/203, 204, 205

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

IEEE

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EAST

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5,855,006 A (HUEMOELLER et al) 29 December 1998, col. 1, line 66 - col. 3, line 14 and col. 8, line 63 - col. 10, line 29.	1-42
Y,P	US 5,911,045 A (LEYBA et al) 08 June 1999, col. 2, line 27 - col. 3, line 24.	1-42
Y,P	US 5,963,913 A (HENNEUSE et al) 05 October 1999, col. 2, line 46 - col. 3, line 26 and col. 4, line 58 - col. 5, line 38.	1-42
A	US 5,491,743 A (SHIIO et al) 13 February 1996, see entire document.	1-42

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

*	Special categories of cited documents:	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E"	earlier document published on or after the international filing date	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
23 APRIL 2000	11 MAY 2000
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Authorized officer ZARNI MAUNG Telephone No. 703-305-9600

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1998) ★

CORRECTED VERSION*

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : G06F 15/00, 15/16

A1

(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/39694

(43) International Publication Date: 6 July 2000 (06.07.00)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US99/31285

(22) International Filing Date: 30 December 1999 (30.12.99)

(30) Priority Data:

60/114,128	30 December 1998 (30.12.98)	US
60/114,396	31 December 1998 (31.12.98)	US

(71)(72) Applicant and Inventor: FRANKE, Paul, D. [US/US]; 2313 Cramden Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241 (US).

(74) Agents: ORKIN, Russell, D. et al.; Webb Ziesenheim Logsdon Orkin & Hanson, P.C., 700 Koppers Building, 436 Seventh Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219–1818 (US).

RECEIVED
WEBB, ZIESENHEIM, LOGSDON
ORKIN, & HANSON PC
OCT 16 2000

(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published

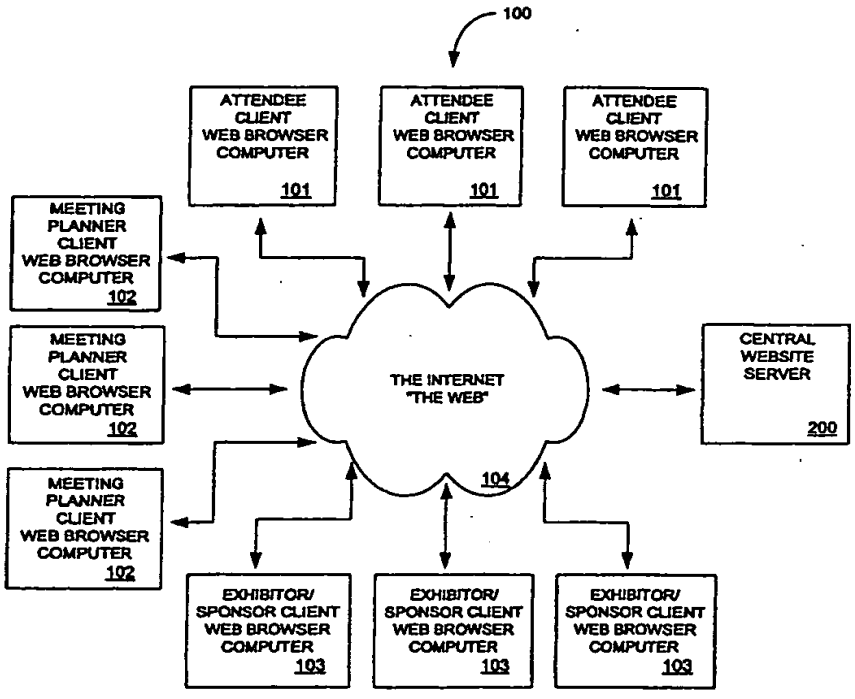
With international search report.

Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.

(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING A PLURALITY OF CYBER–BASED CONVENTIONS

(57) Abstract

A method and system for conducting multiple Internet–based conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings ("conventions") includes a plurality of meeting planner clients (102), exhibitor/sponsor clients (103) and attendee clients (101), all using web browser computers and a central website server (200) on the Internet (104). The system receives and stores initial convention data, and control parameter rules from meeting planner clients (102). Then the system receives and stores exhibit booth display data and control parameter rules for said convention from exhibitor/sponsor clients (103). Based on search criteria provided by the participating attendee client (101), the central website server (200) releases stored database convention information and provides a wide array of convention activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases. Thus, the system allows the creation of a "virtual convention venue" for conventions that exist only on the central website server (200) and available using the Internet (104). Additionally, the system supports and augments a convention being held in a physical or venue–based center (e.g., Moscone Center in San Francisco).



*(Referred to in PCT Gazette No. 40/2000, Section II)

CORRECTED VERSION*

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : G06F 15/00, 15/16

A1

(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/39694

(43) International Publication Date: 6 July 2000 (06.07.00)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US99/31285

(22) International Filing Date: 30 December 1999 (30.12.99)

(30) Priority Data:

60/114,128	30 December 1998 (30.12.98)	US
60/114,396	31 December 1998 (31.12.98)	US

(71)(72) Applicant and Inventor: FRANKE, Paul, D. [US/US]; 2313 Cramden Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241 (US).

(74) Agents: ORKIN, Russell, D. et al.; Webb Ziesenheim Logsdon Orkin & Hanson, P.C., 700 Koppers Building, 436 Seventh Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219–1818 (US).

(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published

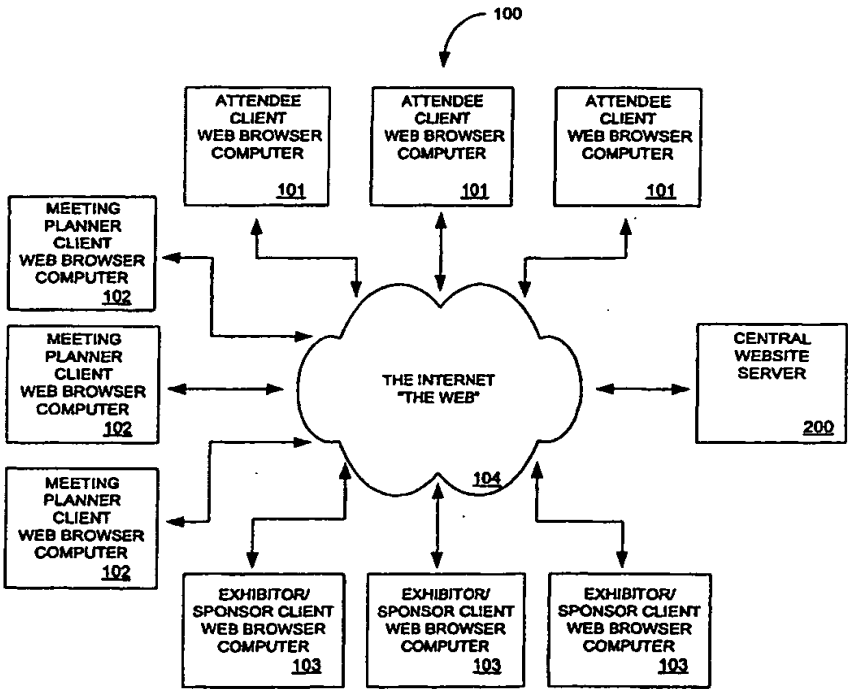
With international search report.

Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.

(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING A PLURALITY OF CYBER–BASED CONVENTIONS

(57) Abstract

A method and system for conducting multiple Internet–based conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings ("conventions") includes a plurality of meeting planner clients (102), exhibitor/sponsor clients (103) and attendee clients (101), all using web browser computers and a central website server (200) on the Internet (104). The system receives and stores initial convention data, and control parameter rules from meeting planner clients (102). Then the system receives and stores exhibit booth display data and control parameter rules for said convention from exhibitor/sponsor clients (103). Based on search criteria provided by the participating attendee client (101), the central website server (200) releases stored database convention information and provides a wide array of convention activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases. Thus, the system allows the creation of a "virtual convention venue" for conventions that exist only on the central website server (200) and available using the Internet (104). Additionally, the system supports and augments a convention being held in a physical or venue–based center (e.g., Moscone Center in San Francisco).



*(Referred to in PCT Gazette No. 40/2000, Section II)

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	**ES**	Spain	**LS**	Lesotho	**SI**	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	**FI**	Finland	**LT**	Lithuania	**SK**	Slovakia
AT	Austria	**FR**	France	**LU**	Luxembourg	**SN**	Senegal
AU	Australia	**GA**	Gabon	**LV**	Latvia	**SZ**	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	**GB**	United Kingdom	**MC**	Monaco	**TD**	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	**GE**	Georgia	**MD**	Republic of Moldova	**TG**	Togo
BB	Barbados	**GH**	Ghana	**MG**	Madagascar	**TJ**	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	**GN**	Guinea	**MK**	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	**TM**	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	**GR**	Greece			**TR**	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	**HU**	Hungary	**ML**	Mali	**TT**	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	**IE**	Ireland	**MN**	Mongolia	**UA**	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	**IL**	Israel	**MR**	Mauritania	**UG**	Uganda
BY	Belarus	**IS**	Iceland	**MW**	Malawi	**US**	United States of America
CA	Canada	**IT**	Italy	**MX**	Mexico	**UZ**	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	**JP**	Japan	**NE**	Niger	**VN**	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	**KE**	Kenya	**NL**	Netherlands	**YU**	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	**KG**	Kyrgyzstan	**NO**	Norway	**ZW**	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	**KP**	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	**NZ**	New Zealand		
CM	Cameroon			**PL**	Poland		
CN	China	**KR**	Republic of Korea	**PT**	Portugal		
CU	Cuba	**KZ**	Kazakstan	**RO**	Romania		
CZ	Czech Republic	**LC**	Saint Lucia	**RU**	Russian Federation		
DE	Germany	**LI**	Liechtenstein	**SD**	Sudan		
DK	Denmark	**LK**	Sri Lanka	**SE**	Sweden		
EE	Estonia	**LR**	Liberia	**SG**	Singapore		

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

CORRECTED VERSION

9/869513

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau

(43) International Publication Date
6 July 2000 (06.07.2000)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 00/39694 A1

(51) International Patent Classification[7]: G06F 15/00, 15/16

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US99/31285

(22) International Filing Date:
30 December 1999 (30.12.1999)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
60/114,128 30 December 1998 (30.12.1998) US
60/114,396 31 December 1998 (31.12.1998) US

(71) Applicant and
(72) Inventor: FRANKE, Paul, D. [US/US]; 106 Springbrooke Drive, Venetia, PA 15367 (US).

(74) Agents: ORKIN, Russell, D. et al.; Webb Ziesenheim Logsdon Orkin & Hanson, P.C., 700 Koppers Building, 436 Seventh Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1818 (US).

(81) Designated States *(national)*: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States *(regional)*: ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

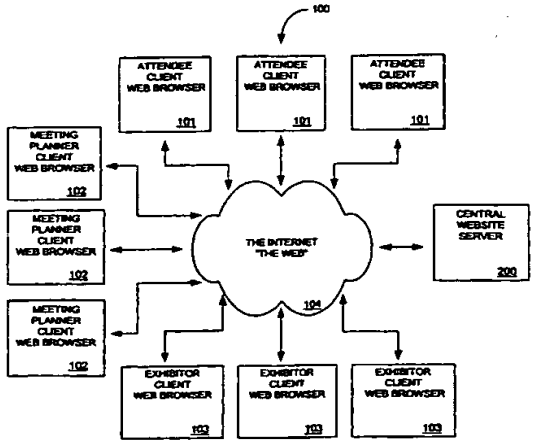
Published:
— *with international search report*

(48) Date of publication of this corrected version:
25 April 2002

(15) Information about Corrections:
see PCT Gazette No. 17/2002 of 25 April 2002, Section II

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING A PLURALITY OF CYBER-BASED CONVENTIONS



(57) Abstract: A method and system for conducting multiple Internet-based conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings ("conventions") includes a plurality of meeting planner clients (102), exhibitor/sponsor clients (103) and attendee clients (101), all using web browser computers and a central website server (200) on the Internet (104). The system receives and stores initial convention data, and control parameter rules from meeting planner clients (102). Then the system receives and stores exhibit booth display data and control parameter rules for said convention from exhibitor/sponsor clients (103). Based on search criteria provided by the participating attendee client (101), the central website server (200) releases stored database convention information and provides a wide array of convention activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases. Thus, the system allows the creation of a "virtual convention venue" for conventions that exist only on the central website server (200) and available using the Internet (104). Additionally, the system supports and augments a convention being held in a physical or venue-based center (e.g., Moscone Center in San Francisco).

WO 00/39694 A1

Previous Correction:
see PCT Gazette No. 40/2000 of 5 October 2000, Section II

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING A PLURALITY OF CYBER-BASED CONVENTIONS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

The present invention relates to the field of networked computer systems. Specifically, the present invention relates to the field of sharing information in an Internet-based convention system.

2. Description of the Related Art

Convention, event, conference, trade show and meeting ("convention") attendance for all parties involved ("clients") is currently a costly, time-consuming process. Travel costs and the size of many conventions have made gathering of information at a convention a much less efficient process. For large conventions, there is a need for a systematic method of locating exhibitors and retrieving information. The widespread availability of computers with graphics capabilities and Internet connectivity makes it feasible to use them to simulate various aspects of a convention to augment or replace a visit to the physical conference location.

Many attendees would like to attend a convention through the convenience of the Internet and web-browser computers. Many professional meeting planners working with associations or corporations would like to set up and hold their conventions only on the Internet or to support or augment their venue-based conventions. And, many exhibitor/sponsors would like to participate at a convention through the convenience of the Internet.

Until now, there has been no suitable way to enable these three fundamental "clients" to participate with the full functions of the convention industry using the convenience of the Internet. The meeting planner client needs to perform the central processing functions to load and control their specific virtual convention, trade show or meeting. The exhibitor/sponsor client needs to perform the processing functions to design, load and control their specific exhibits and sponsor orders related to conventions, trade shows or meetings that meet their

specific marketing and participation criteria. Finally, an attendee client needs a wide array of sensible convention functions including: convention selection, association selection, conference search, events search, show search, session and forum attendance and exhibit display visits.

A variety of methods involving an attendee client viewing exhibit booths in a virtual-only trade show or participating in a session and forum have been implemented resembling an Internet-based convention. Despite these resemblances, significant omissions were determined upon reviewing these websites and comparing methods in terms of the invention.

Of primary importance in terms of omission was that all sites demonstrated a single-specific convention situation (e.g., single association, single industry, single product classification). No sites were found offering a plurality of separate conventions, nor were methods found to support multiple conventions.

Another primary omission was that all sites were either solely "venue-based content convention" or solely "cyber-based content convention" in terms of any methods demonstrated. No combination "venue-with-cyber" methods were demonstrated for allowing the creation of a "virtual convention venue" for conventions that exist on the central website server while concurrently supporting and augmenting a convention being held in a physical or venue-based center.

Another primary omission was that no methods were demonstrated for meeting planner client services; it appeared that meeting and convention content information and support control, if any, were pre-loaded by a webmaster/programmer.

Another primary omission was that no methods were demonstrated for exhibitor/sponsor client services. It appeared that exhibit booth design, content and processing flow, if any, were again pre-loaded or built by a webmaster/programmer. Also, the important method presented

in the invention of using exhibit booth panel sizes made up of advertising standard ad banner sizes was not demonstrated.

Fundamentally, the sites appeared to place overall design emphasis only on the trade show aspects and not the other important activities of the complete convention. Attendee client methods were generally limited to simple listings and displays of exhibitor information. A wide range of convention activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases presented in this invention were missing from the sites reviewed. By way of illustration, no attendee client methods were demonstrated for call for papers, paper and proceedings presentations, membership signup, or board and committee messages. No attendee client methods were demonstrated for searching a wide range of sessions and forums by subjects or a certain speaker, or searching a plurality of conventions with extensive criteria. The exhibit content searches, when offered, were very limited.

A complete industry-standard convention includes not only trade show aspects of exhibitor booths, but also registration, sessions and forums, special events, sponsor recognition, call for papers, paper and proceedings presentations, general convention information, board and committee meetings, helpful maps, hotel support participants, CVB support participants, etc. And, three distinct and essential parties are involved in the activities to hold a successful convention: 1) the meeting planner client, who defines, organizes, and sets it up; 2) the exhibitor/sponsor client who exhibits products or services, or sponsors the various aspects; and 3) the attendee client who participates in the various functions. The robust activities of these three parties that make up a complete industry-standard convention held in a virtual convention venue were not demonstrated. Therefore, no altogether satisfactory method has heretofore been

available for conducting multiple Internet-based conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings.

The most complete example of a single-specific convention site coupled with solely "venue-based content-convention" was the IAAM 1999 Annual Conference and Trade Show. IAAM 1999 Annual Conference and Trade Show, Internet address cyber-centre.com/98iaam, demonstrated only convention content information for a single-specific venue-based event. There was a simple list of exhibitors with a solitary front-end booth lobby graphic with links to venue-based event information pages, but no exhibitor/sponsor client booths. No attendee client, meeting planner client or exhibitor/sponsor client methods were demonstrated.

Brief Summary of the Invention

The present invention advantageously fills the aforementioned deficiency in the prior art by providing a method and system for conducting multiple Internet-based conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings ("conventions") including the meeting planner clients, exhibitor/sponsor clients and attendee clients, all using web browser computers and a central website server on the Internet. The invention includes a method for conducting conventions by facilitating an exchange between meeting planner clients and attendee clients. This exchange includes electronically storing convention content information at a central website, receiving selections for convention content information from attendee clients, and releasing the selected convention content information to the attendee clients. The system receives and stores initial convention data, and control parameter rules from meeting planner clients. Then the system receives and stores exhibit booth display data and control parameter rules for said convention from exhibitor/sponsor clients. Based on search criteria provided by the participating attendee client, the central website server releases stored database convention information and provides a wide array of convention activity simulated with the program

instructions and the databases. Thus, the system allows the creation of a "virtual convention venue" for conventions that exist only on the central website server and available using the Internet. Additionally, the system supports and augments a convention being held in a physical or venue-based center (such as Moscone Center in San Francisco).

The present invention is a computer system and a method for the use of computers for implementing an Internet-based, virtual convention venue. The invention includes the computer implementation of functions associated with conventions, described here as "cyber" functions. These computer-implemented functions included attendee control, database capabilities for locating convention information, a cyber exhibit booth display system, cyber sessions and forums, cyber attendee profiler alerts, cyber meeting planner support system, and cyber exhibitor and sponsor support system, and procedures for making use of them via remote computers.

The computer system implementation also allows the creation of cyber conventions that exist only virtually, based on the Internet. The computer system can also be implemented to produce an on-line convention that is related to convention occurring at a physical location, referred to here as a venue-based convention.

Description of the Drawings

The accompanying drawings provide a further understanding of the invention and are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification. The drawings illustrate preferred embodiments of the invention, and, together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

In the drawings:

Fig. 1 illustrates a schematic overview of one embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 illustrates a block diagram of the central website server of the system in accordance with the embodiment in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 illustrates a block diagram of the virtual convention venue databases and relationships in accordance with the embodiment in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 illustrates a block diagram of the virtual convention venue program instructions in accordance with the embodiment in Fig. 1;

Fig. 5 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the attendee client global searches and control program instructions in accordance with this invention;

Fig. 6 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the cyber conventions with cyber exhibit booth display, and cyber sessions and forums - program instructions in accordance with this invention;

Figs. 7A-7B illustrate a sitemap flow diagram of venue-based conventions WITH cyber conventions with cyber exhibit booth display, and cyber sessions and forums - program instructions in accordance with this invention;

Fig. 8 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the meeting planner client support - program instructions in accordance with this invention;

Fig. 9 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the exhibitor/sponsor client support - program instructions in accordance with this invention; and

Figs. 10A-10J illustrate 10 sample exhibit booth displays used in screen views and made from common Internet advertising ad banner sizes in accordance with this invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

SYSTEM STRUCTURE

Fig. 1 is an overall system block diagram illustrating a convention system **100** and presents a preferred embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the central website server **200** is linked up over the Internet or the Web **104** to one of three separate

client types implemented as standard web browser computers: an attendee client 101, a meeting planner client 102, or an exhibitor/sponsor client 103. A virtual convention venue transaction, such as a web page display or database search query, can be initiated by any one of the clients 101, 102, or 103 by means of a web browser computer. Fig. 1 illustrates the relationship of each type of client 101, 102 and 103, and their respective computers, to the central website server 200. The information required to implement the transaction is passed between any one of the clients 101, 102, or 103 through a web browser computer, and the central website server 200 until the transaction is complete. The central website server 200 processes and keeps track of all transactions in the system.

The overall virtual convention venue process normally begins with a meeting planner client 102 who launches a standard web browser software program, such as Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, and establishes connection with the central website server 200 across The Web 104. The central website server 200 performs the central processing functions to load and control the specific virtual convention, trade show or meeting of meeting planner client 102. Multiple meeting planner clients 102 are depicted in the diagram to represent an open-ended number of meeting planner clients and subsequent conventions, trade shows and meetings. The term "meeting planner client" is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual (or association) that organizes and manages a convention, event, conference or trade show.

Next, an exhibitor/sponsor client 103 establishes connection with the central website server 200 across The Web 104. The central website server 200 performs the processing functions to design, load and control the specific exhibits and sponsor orders related to specific virtual conventions, trade shows or meetings of exhibitor/sponsor to client 103. Multiple

exhibitor/sponsor clients **103** are depicted in the diagram to represent an open-ended number of exhibitors and sponsors and subsequent exhibitor booths and advertising. The term "exhibitor/sponsor client" is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual or business organization that exhibits booths at a convention, event, conference or trade show; or, is a sponsor of such.

Finally, an attendee client **101** establishes connection with the central website server **200** across The Web **104**. The central website server **200** now performs the functions of database query and page display processing including: convention selection, association selection, conference search, events search, show search, session and forum attendance and exhibit display visits. Again, multiple attendee clients **101** are depicted in the diagram to represent an open-ended number of convention, trade show and meeting attendees. The term "attendee" is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual that attends a convention, event, conference, or trade show.

Alternatively to beginning with only the meeting planner client **102**, the virtual convention venue process can also begin with either the meeting planner client **102** or an exhibitor/sponsor client **103**.

Fig. 2 illustrates a block diagram of the central website server **200** implemented as a standard computer file server capable of high-volume web initiated transactions. As shown in Fig. 2, the central website server includes a central processor unit or CPU **230**, RAM **210**, ROM **220**, network interface **250**, and data storage device **240**. The data storage device **240** includes virtual convention venue databases **300**, as well as the virtual convention venue program instructions **400** for CPU **230**. CPU **230** is connected to each of the computer elements of the central website server **200**.

CPU 230 may comprise a conventional high-speed processor capable of executing program instructions to perform the functions described herein. Although the central website server 200 is described as being implemented with a single CPU 230, in alternative embodiments the central website server 200 could be implemented with several processors operating in parallel or in series. Similarly, the other components of the central website server 200 could be expanded to handle larger volumes of web-initiated transactions and accommodate several different communication protocols.

The use of a CPU 230 in conjunction with ROM 220, RAM 210, a data storage device 240 and network interface 250 to The Web 104 is well known to those skilled in the art of computer file server website design.

Fig. 3 illustrates a block diagram of the virtual convention venue databases 300 and key record relationships including meeting planners database 310, exhibitors/sponsors database 320, booths database 330, attendees database 340, conventions database 350, sessions and forums database 360, convention and visitors bureau ("CVB") hosts databases 370, and paper presentations and proceedings database 380. The databases in venue databases 300 may be implemented as standard relational databases (such as Microsoft SQL Server7) capable of supporting searching and storing records with standard field characteristics including alpha, numeric, alphanumeric, currency, yes/no, OLE object, hyperlink, as well as multimedia information such as video data, movies, photographs, and audio data.

The exhibitors/sponsors database 320 may include cross-referencing fields to booths database 330. This allows multiple booths for each exhibitor/sponsor. Also, the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350. This allows for multiple exhibitors/sponsors per convention and for an exhibitor/sponsor to participate in multiple

conventions. The sessions and forums database 360 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350. This allows multiple sessions for each convention. The sessions and forums database 360 also may include cross-referencing fields to the exhibitors/sponsors database 320. This allows multiple exhibitors/sponsors to host or finance a convention session or sessions. The meeting planners database 310 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350; this allows multiple conventions for each meeting planner. The conventions and visitors bureau ("CVB") hosts database 370 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350. This allows a CVB to host multiple conventions. The paper presentations and proceedings database 380 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350. This allows multiple technical or professional papers to be presented and multiple meeting proceedings to be documented at a convention or meeting. Finally, the attendees database 340 may include cross-referencing fields to exhibitors/sponsors database 320, conventions database 350, sessions and forums database 360, and booths database 330. This allows tracking as well as other types of searches related to the attendees.

The use of relational databases in conjunction with website computer program instructions is well known to those skilled in the art of computer programming.

As noted above, the meeting planners database 310 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350; this allows multiple conventions for each meeting planner. Also, the meeting planners database 310 may include fields concerning individual meeting planners such as account number, name/address information, URL and e-mail information, passwords, association logo and a keyword array.

As noted above, the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 may include cross-referencing fields to booths database 330; this allows multiple booths for each

exhibitor/sponsor. Also, the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 preferably includes cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350; this allows for multiple exhibitors/sponsors per convention and for an exhibitor/sponsor to participate in multiple conventions. Cross-referencing fields are also provided to the sessions and forums database 360 for sessions sponsored, and the attendees database 340 for attendees interested, viewed exhibit or contacted. Also, the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 may include fields concerning individual exhibitors/sponsors such as name/address information, URL and e-mail information, passwords, exhibitor/sponsor logo, exhibit page control, sponsor package, welcome banners, session sponsor advertising information, and venue-based switch control.

As noted above, the booths database 330 may include cross-referencing fields to the exhibitors/sponsors database 320; this allows multiple booths for each exhibitor/sponsor. Also, the booths database 330 preferably includes cross-referencing fields to the attendees database 340 for attendees interested, viewed exhibit or wishing further information. Also, the booths database 330 preferably includes cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350 for the various conventions at which the booth appears. The booths database 330 may include fields concerning booth design type, an array of panels making up the booth, and the booth processing flow control. Fields also include accounting control and related cost totals, descriptions, exhibit subject(s) and keyword(s), exhibitor text, and venue-based switch control.

The attendees database 340 may include cross-referencing fields to exhibitors/sponsors database 320 - for exhibitors and sponsors of interest, contacted and booth viewed. Cross-referencing fields are also provided to the conventions database 350 - for specific convention registrations, previous attendance and interests. Cross-referencing fields are also provided to the sessions and

forums database 360 - for specific session and forum registrations, previous attendance and interests. Cross-referencing fields are also provided to the booths database 330 - for specific booth interest and attendance. Fields also include name/address information, e-mail information, passwords, attendance package control, venue-based switch control, paid convention accounting control array, credit card information, interest codes array, and association affiliations array.

The conventions database 350 is at the heart of the invention. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the meeting planners database 310 tying in the specific convention to the meeting planner hosting and controlling the event. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the exhibitors/sponsors database 320, tying in all related exhibitors and sponsors. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the booths database 330, tying the booths to the convention. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the attendees database 340, tying in the attendees. Cross-referencing fields are provided to the sessions and forums database 360 and CVB hosts database 370, tying the sessions and CVBs respectively. Finally, cross-referencing fields are provided to the paper presentations and proceedings database 380, tying in the multiple papers and proceedings, as appropriate. Fields also include convention content information such as:

convention name, convention type including standard convention, conference, event, or trade show;
conference name;
event name;
trade show name;
convention dates (virtual- and venue-based);
convention theme;
association name;
association acronym;
association subjects;
welcome message;

convention overview;
convention logo;
convention registration fees;
exhibitor/sponsor client registration edit criteria control parameters;
exhibitor/sponsor client booth criteria control parameters;
attendee client registration edit criteria control parameters;
sessions and forums processing flow control parameters;
call for papers processing flow control parameters;
cyber broadcast processing flow control parameters;
potential exhibitor and sponsor contacts;
convention phone number;
convention fax number;
board and committee messages/reports;
program plug-ins and downloads;
convention URL address; and,
convention e-mail address.

Further fields in conventions database 350 differentiated for the convention parameter type equal to "venue-with-cyber" include:

venue-based name and address information;
venue-based pictures;
venue-based registration information;
venue-based registration fees;
venue-based exhibitor floor maps;
geographic location;
recommended dress;
average temperatures at the venue-based destination;
direction information for boards and committees;
housing bureau involvement and program link control with URL links;
hotel participants and accommodations with URL links;
travel arrangements with URL links;
convention and visitor bureau ("CVB") participants with URL links;

rental car transportation with URL links;
venue-based destination parking with URL links; and,
sponsors list with URL links.

As noted above, the sessions and forums database 360 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350, allowing multiple sessions and forums for each convention, tied to the said convention. This tie to the convention also provides a cross-link tie to the paper presentations and proceedings database 380, and subsequent information such as individual papers presented and session and forum proceedings. Further, the sessions and forums database 360 includes cross-referencing fields to the exhibitors/sponsors database 320 allowing multiple exhibitors and sponsors to host or finance a session or sessions. As described above, the sessions and forums database 360 also has cross-referencing fields to the attendees database 340 for the multiple attendees attending each session or forum. Further fields in the sessions and forums database 360 include speaker name, session or forum name, subject(s), sponsor copy words, session or forum copy words, dates/times, special fees, handout materials, audio-visual notes, multimedia control, and presenter. Further fields in the sessions and forums database 360 differentiated for the convention parameter type equal to "venue-with-cyber" include venue-based floor maps of the sessions and forums.

As noted above, the convention and visitors bureau ("CVB") hosts database 370 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350 allowing a CVB to host multiple conventions. Fields in the CVB database 370 include CVB name/address-type information, URL and e-mail addresses, special banner or other advertising.

As noted above, the paper presentations and proceedings database 380 may include cross-referencing fields to the conventions database 350 allowing multiple technical or professional papers to be presented and multiple meeting proceedings to be documented at a

convention or meeting. Further fields in the paper presentations and proceedings database **380** include author, URL and email addresses, academic affiliation, keywords, abstracts, paper title, summary, paper text detail, figures, audio-visual notes, and multimedia control.

Fig. 4 illustrates a block diagram of the virtual convention venue website program instructions **400**. CPU **230** (Fig. 2) is programmed with program instructions **400** using standard website programming languages such as HTML, CFML, Javascript, or CSS, and executes various functions described in connection with Figs. 5-9. These program instructions **400** can comprise, but are not limited to, flow control, web page display or a search query to the virtual convention venue databases **300** initiated by any one of the clients **101**, **102**, or **103** by way of web browser computers, to which information is transmitted in response. The use of program instructions **400** in conjunction with relational databases **300** on a central website server **200** is well known to those skilled in the art of computer programming and website design. These program instructions **400** comprise the information input, processing and output procedures including but not limited to receiving queries, control parameters and content information from any of the three client types, processing in terms of differentiating and storing the information, and releasing appropriate and formatted information. Described in simplest terms, the attendee client global searches and control program instructions **500** on the central website server **200** assists the attendee client **101** in determining what conventions are appropriate for their participation, "registering" and "attending" a convention in the virtual convention venue databases **300**. The term "attendee" is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual that attends a convention, event, conference, or trade show. The attendee client global searches and control program instructions **500** are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 5.

The meeting planner client support program instructions **800** on the central website server **200** assists the meeting planner client **102** in setting up, organizing, and controlling a convention in the virtual convention venue databases **300** linked up over The Web **104**. The meeting planner client support program instructions **800** are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 8.

Similarly, the exhibitor/sponsor client support program instructions **900** on the central website server **200** assist the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** in determining what conventions are appropriate for their participation, and in ordering and setting up a booth (or booths) and sponsorship at a convention in the virtual convention venue databases **300**. The exhibitor/sponsor client support program instructions **900** are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 9.

The attendee client global searches and control program instructions **500** on the central website server **200** assists the attendee client **101** in determining what conventions are appropriate for their participation, "registering" and "attending" a convention in the virtual convention venue databases **300**. The attendee client global searches and control program instructions **500** are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 5.

Block **600** in Fig. 4 illustrates the program instructions on the central website server **200** associated with flow control, web page display or query to the virtual convention venue databases **300** with respect to a 100% "cyber-based" convention. The computer system implementation allows the creation of cyber conventions that exist only in virtual reality, based on the Internet. It is important to note that the program instructions **600** may be configured to execute only IF the convention defined in conventions database **350** is only 100% cyber-based e.g., not a convention also being held in a physical (venue-based) center such as The Moscone Center in San Francisco (venue based convention). The attendee client **101** now has

a wide array of convention activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases. These activities are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 6.

Block 700 on Fig. 4 illustrates the program instructions on the central website server 200 associated with flow control, web page display or query to the virtual convention venue databases 300 with respect to a "cyber-based" convention augmenting a venue-based convention. The computer system implementation allows the creation of a cyber convention available to attendees at any time before, during, or after a venue-based convention. Again, the program instructions 700 may be configured to execute with or in support of a venue-based convention. The attendee client 101 has a wide array of activity simulated with the program instructions and the databases. These activities are described in greater detail in connection with Fig. 7.

System Operation

The operation of system 100 is now further described in connection with the sitemap flow diagrams shown in Figs. 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 and reference the sample exhibit booth displays shown in Figs. 10A-10J. The use of sitemap flow diagrams in conjunction with website computer program instructions is well known to those skilled in the art of computer programming.

System 100, through the computer programs 400 described below and the interaction with the virtual convention venue databases 300 on the central website server 200, provides the method and apparatus for conducting multiple Internet-based conventions. Because of modern relational database storage capabilities and the database design presented herein, it is important to note that the invention accommodates, simultaneously, a number of conventions, meeting planner clients, exhibitor/sponsor clients, attendee clients, exhibitor/sponsor booths, sessions and forums, technical or professional papers, proceedings documents, and CVB hosts.

Fig. 5 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the attendee client global searches and control program instructions **500** in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. From the virtual convention venue homepage **501**, a prototypical top-level programming control point in website design, the attendee client global searches and control program instructions **500** provide a wide array of search entry points into the virtual convention venue databases **300** and dive-down/branch control to additional program instructions as depicted in Fig. 5. The term "dive down/branch control" refers to the capability of the program to execute a portion of the program instructions in response to a user selection choice, and to the configuration of the program so that smaller portions so executed are nested within larger portions so executed. The attendee client **101** has several major selection choices with follow-up database query and page display processing including: convention selection **505**, association selection **510**, conference search **515**, events search **520**, trade show search **525**, cyber exhibits **530**, sessions and forums **535**, or convention and visitor bureau ("CVB") host sponsors **540**. Each of these programmed selection choices has special search and database list or follow-on processing capabilities.

The convention selection **505** program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases **300** and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page display. These program instructions are directed to either or both of cyber conventions **600** and venue based and cyber conventions **700**. Query options include a search of all convention events. In this case, "conventions" include all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows by (and including combinations) of name, association name, geographic location, event dates, convention themes or session subjects in the databases. To provide further insight to the convention selection **505** database query and

page display process, the following search questions examples result in lists of convention records which can lead the attendee client **101** to appropriate convention welcome pages profession related examples are used where appropriate.

Example No. 1. By convention name search example.

Query What are the upcoming "bar association" conventions? Response This query results in a list of all conventions with the words "bar association" including "American Bar Association Meeting on Litigation", "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", and "Pittsburgh Bar Association Contracts Forum". Link to the appropriate convention welcome page can be made from the resulting list.

Example No. 2. By geographic location search example.

Query What conventions are being held in Orlando (city), or Florida (state or province)? Response This query results in a list of all Orlando conventions. Sub-queries What upcoming "bar association" conventions are being held in "Orlando"? What upcoming "bar association" conventions are being held with The Web **104** being the geographic location? What "bar association" conventions are being held "on The Web" at the virtual convention venue invention? Response These queries result in lists of all "bar association" conventions being held in Orlando or only on The Web **104**.

Example No. 3. By event dates (in combination) search example.

Query I have an extra couple of days, 7/15/99 through 7/19/99 in Orlando; what "bar association" meetings are going on? Event dates is also used in the compound database query and page display.

Example No. 4. By convention theme search example.

Query What are the upcoming "bar association" conventions on "intellectual property"? The convention or theme is also used in the database query.

Example No. 5. By session subjects search example.

Query What conventions have sessions and forums on "software contract writing"? The session and forums keywords are used to list the conventions.

The association selection **510** program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases **300** and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page display, again in terms of either the 100% cyber-based convention **600** or the venue-with-cyber convention **700** from the association database entry point. Query options exemplified in the following examples include a search of all conventions. Again "conventions" includes all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows by (and including combinations) of association name, acronym or association subject.

Example No. 7. By association name search example.

Query What are the upcoming "bar association" conventions? Response This query results in a list of all associations with the words "bar association" including "American Bar Association" and "Pittsburgh Bar Association". From this view, the attendee client **101** can next view all conventions for a specific association. Link to the appropriate convention welcome page can be made from the final list.

Example No. 8. By association acronym search example.

Query What are the upcoming "ABA" conventions? Response This query will first list the associations with the acronym of "ABA" including "American Bar Association", "American Beauty Association", "American Bankers Association", and "Association for Behavior Analysis".

Link to the appropriate convention welcome page can be made from the final list.

Example No. 9. By association subjects search example.

Query What are the upcoming "law" or "legal" conventions? Response This query results in a list of all associations with "law" or "legal" subject categories including "American Bar Association", "American College of Trial Lawyers", "American Society of Notaries" and "Trademark Society". From this view, the attendee client **101** can next view all conventions for a specific association. Link to the appropriate convention welcome page can be made from the final list.

A specific subset of the conventions industry is termed or identified as the "conference". The "conference" is typically a mission- or cause-oriented association sponsored meeting. An example of the "conference" convention is the Peace on Earth Conference held by the World Affairs Council of Washington. A "conference" may or may not have exhibitors.

Because certain attendee clients **101** are searching for a convention that has been termed or identified by the meeting planner client **102** as a "conference" or are specifically interested in a "conference", the invention provides a conference search **515** of the virtual conventions databases **300** of all conventions. In the virtual convention venue databases **300** "conventions" includes all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows, by (and including combinations) conference name, association name, geographic location, event dates, conference themes or session subjects. The conference search **515** program instructions process is identical to the convention selection **505** program instructions process control listed above with page direction or attendee client **101** word directions modified for "conference" and provides query search options of the database and resultant

pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page program instruction processes.

Particular conventions are termed or identified as an "event". The "event" is typically a specific topic-oriented corporate or association meeting, such as the "Xerox Top Sales Winners" event or the "Intellectual Property Writing Workshop" event hosted by the American Bar Association. An "event" may or may not have exhibitors.

Because certain attendee clients **101** are searching for a convention that has been termed or identified by the meeting planner client **102** as an "event" or are specifically interested in an "event", the invention provides an events search **520** of the virtual convention venue databases **300** of all conventions. In the virtual convention venue databases **300** "conventions" includes all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows, by (and including combinations) conference name, association name, geographic location, event dates, conference themes or session subjects. The events search **520** program instructions process is identical to the convention selection **505** program instructions process control listed above with page direction or attendee client **101** word directions modified for "event" and provides query search options of the database and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page processes.

Yet another subset of the conventions industry is termed or identified as the "trade show". The "trade show" is typically a "trade" association- or organization-sponsored convention involving industry-related vendor exhibitor booths as a primary function of the convention. An example of the "trade show" convention is the Athletic Equipment Managers Show which would feature many vendor booths from the athletic sports equipment manufacturers industry.

Because certain attendee clients **101** are searching for a convention that has been termed or identified by the meeting planner client **102** as a "trade

show" or are specifically interested in a "trade show", the invention provides a trade show search 525 of the virtual convention venue databases 300 of all conventions. In the virtual convention venue databases 300 "conventions" includes all conventions, events, conferences and trade shows, by (and including combinations) conference name, association name, geographic location, event dates, conference themes or session subjects. The trade show search 525 program instructions process is identical to the convention selection 505 program instructions process control listed above with page direction or attendee client 101 word directions modified for "trade show" and provides query search options of the database and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page processes.

The cyber exhibits and cyber exhibit booth display 530 program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases 300 and resultant pathway(s) to the cyber exhibitor booths display program instructions process. A "cyber exhibit" or "cyber exhibit booth" is a unique web browser page display layout providing a show, demonstration or presentation of products and/or services made up of an open-ended number of common Internet advertising ad banner sizes arranged to appear similar to physical display booths used in the convention industry. The term "cyber" defines this overall display layout and viewing of the advertising ad banners from the virtual convention venue databases 300 accessed via the invention.

The "exhibits" or "exhibit booths" used in the invention are made up of "panels" illustrated in Figs. 10A-10J. The panels may be common Internet advertising ad banner sizes such as full banner, full banner with vertical navigation bar, half banner, square banner, vertical banner, button #1, button #2, and micro button. Each panel can also represent a major display venue in which each panel can bridge the attendee client 101 to various

promotional page venues such as the full exhibitor brochure, multiple and rotating digital photos of products, or video clips.

The cyber exhibits and cyber exhibit booth display **530** program instructions process provides query search options without the need to process the through a convention. At the attendee client **101** entry level, the search results are important and unique, bypassing the normal convention exhibit venue, because the booths listed for display are not "tied" to specific conventions. In simple terms, the cyber attendee client **101** is able to "make up" their own exhibition of booths from the virtual convention venue databases **300** based on the query options selected. Query options include a search of all cyber exhibit booths in the database as further explained in the following examples:

Example No. 10. By exhibitor name search example.

Query Show me the "Nike®" cyber exhibit booths. Response The invention finds the Nike® Activewear booth (showing golf wear) from the National Golf Foundation Annual Convention in Chicago, finds another Nike® Activewear booth from the National Youth Sports Coaches Association Fall Meeting in Orlando, finds the Nike® Skates & Ice Hockey Equipment booth from the Ice Skating Institute of America Show in London, and finds the Nike® Basketball Shoes booth from the Athletic Equipment Managers Association convention being held totally/only on The Web **104** at the virtual convention venue **100**. These cyber exhibit booths are displayed in a special Nike® exhibition for the attendee client **101**.

Example No. 11. By subject search example.

Query Show me the "sporting goods" cyber exhibit booths. Response The invention searches the virtual convention venue databases **300** and finds the conventions and exhibitors with the subject category "sporting goods" and displays the booths for the attendee client **101**. Cyber

exhibit booths from conventions may include the National Golf Foundation or National Ski Retailers Association. Exhibitors may include Winchester® and Everlast®. The cyber exhibit booths are displayed in a special exhibition for the attendee client **101**.

Example No. 12. By key word(s) search example.

This search is much more restrictive than subject search directly above. Query Show me "ice hockey gloves". Response The invention finds only one - the Hockey Zone® cyber exhibit booth from the Ice Skating Institute of America Show in London and from the key words used by the exhibitor/sponsor client **103**.

Example No. 13. By convention search example.

This databases search and program link control is special in that once a convention is selected, the attendee client 101 can go (after registration) directly to the booth displays of the selected convention. Query Show me the "bar association" convention booths. Response This query first results in a list of all conventions with booths with the words "bar association" including "American Bar Association Meeting on Litigation" and "American Bar Association Annual Meeting". Direct link (or links concatenating multiple conventions) is made to the convention-tied cyber exhibit booths - in this example showing TimeSlips® (the legal industry's time keeping and billing software), Crane® Stationery Co. (100% cotton bond engraved stationery) and ABC Mortgage Insurance (a mortgage insurance wholesaler to lawyers).

The sessions and forums **535** selection program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases **300** and resultant pathway(s) to cyber session **620** program instructions process or cyber forum **625** program instructions process of the 100% cyber-based convention **600** or to the sessions **720** program instructions process or forums **725** program

instructions process of the venue-with-cyber convention 700. A "cyber session" or "cyber forum" is a unique 100% Internet-based session or forum application. A "venue-based session" or "venue-based forum" is a standard venue-based convention listing of sessions and forums.

Query options at sessions and forums 535 include a search of all session and forum records in the virtual convention venue databases for session and forum content. A sessions and forums search list is provided and appropriate programming link control. This is explained in the following examples:

Example No. 14. By speaker search example.

Query Are there any upcoming sessions or forums with "Alan Dershowitz"? Response ConventionNet database finds the session "The Blame Excuse by Professor Alan Dershowitz"; 10:00am to 11:00am; 7/15/99 at the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting" in Pittsburgh at the Hilton Convention Center. The invention also lists a "cyber forum" on "the Blame Excuse Defense" with Professor Alan Dershowitz hosted by the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", 8:00pm to 10:00pm EST "on" or at the virtual convention venue.

Example No. 15. Query By subject search example (e.g., "legal defense").

Example No. 16. Query By date (e.g., 7/15/99).

Example No. 17. Query By presenter - (e.g. "TimeSlips or American Bar Association").

The convention and visitor bureau host sponsors 540 selection program instructions process provides query search options of the virtual convention venue databases 300 and resultant pathway(s) to the appropriate convention welcome page display - appropriate in terms of either a 100% cyber-based convention 600 or a venue-with-cyber convention 700. Convention and Visitor Bureaus ("CVBs") are often major "hosts" of large conventions in their respective destinations. For example, the Greater

Pittsburgh Convention & Visitors Bureau hosts the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting" and assists with various meeting arrangements. In the virtual convention venue databases **300**, relational ties are made to CVB host sponsors, if applicable.

The association level direct entry **550** program instructions process defines a direct path for a specific convention for a participating association. In this way the meeting planner of the association can advertise a direct web address to the official convention welcome page for the convention. In other words, this process is designed to go around the "query search" front-end process, because the attendee client **101** is directed right to a specific convention. For example, "americanbar.conventionnet.com" can be defined in the invention by webmaster direct programming and the attendee clients **101** can be directed (by advertising or by a link from the participating association) or "started" at the specific or official convention welcome page of the American Bar Association Annual Convention.

The past attendee direct entry from interest profiler alert generation control **560** provides a program-generated alerting via standard Internet electronic mail systems to "past" attendee clients **101**, about new conventions on the virtual convention venue system **100**. The program instructions **400** tracks interests of the attendee clients **101** at various points - during cyber exhibits registration, during convention registration, just visiting a booth, attending a session or participating in a forum. This interest tracking is termed the "interest profiler". The invention periodically checks through a batch processing function the past "attendee interest profile" against new conventions, sessions, forums and exhibit booth "themes", "subjects" and "key words", and generates electronic mail to the past attendee to now visit the virtual convention venue system **100** - with appropriate matched approaches to link or direct the past attendee to

the correct level or record in the virtual convention venue databases **300** - the convention, session, forum or exhibit booth. Optionally, other batch functions accumulate numerical information and generate numerical and statistical reports from the virtual convention venue databases **300**. The batch processing programming functions, operating in the background of the central website server **200**, are not depicted on the sitemap flow diagrams shown in Figs. 5 through 9.

Fig. 6 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of options available through the cyber conventions program instructions **600** in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. In the above discussion of Fig. 5, the title of this programming area was simplified and shortened to "100% cyber-based convention **600**". It is important to again note that this programming control section **600**, in terms of programming and displays, is only used if the convention is only 100% cyber-based.

From the convention welcome page **601**, the 100% cyber-based convention **600** program instructions provide a wide array of processing using the virtual convention venue databases **300** to simulate attendance at a specific convention. The cyber convention is specific and defined. "Dive down" or sub-processing within this section is limited to the specific convention (e.g., "American Bar Association Meeting on Litigation", "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", or "Pittsburgh Bar Association Contracts Forum"). The attendee client **101** has several major selection choices with follow-up database query and page display processing including a convention welcome message **605**, registration desk **610**, cyber/exhibit booths **615** with display, cyber sessions **620**, cyber forums **625**, sponsors list **630**, call for papers **635**, papers and proceedings presentations **640**, cyber broadcast schedule and events **645**, and sponsor opportunities **650**. Each of these programmed selection choices has special search and database list, dive-down program flow control, web page

display or follow-on processing capabilities as further described below.

The welcome message **605** program instructions displays from the virtual convention venue databases **300** the specific convention overview information such as and including a director message, welcome information, overall dates of the meeting, and meeting theme. The specific convention information would have already been set up or entered in the invention by the meeting planner client **102** through meeting planner client support - program instructions **800** (described below). Dive-down program flow control is provided to specialized convention information such as common web browser program "plug-ins and downloads" (e.g., IPIX™, RealPlayer™) needed to assist in supporting the display and programming of the cyber convention, the cyber sessions or forums, cyber broadcast events, or cyber exhibit booth displays.

The registration desk **610** program instructions directs the attendee client **101** to register for services of the specific convention. Based on registration policies and fee amounts and other registration control parameters contained in the virtual convention venue databases **300** (set up or loaded by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**) the attendee client **101** follows the program flow control and web page display instructions. The program processes the registration information obtained from the attendee client **101**. For example, cyber exhibit booth display **615** "attendance" may be "free" or the attendee client **101** can pay via a credit card or other Internet common payment approaches. Similarly, registration policies and fee amounts with program flow control can affect "attendance" at cyber sessions **620**, cyber forums **625**, cyber broadcast events **645**, or other areas as program controlled by the registration policies and fee amount fields.

During the registration desk **610** program control, the attendee client **101** also provides interest profile

information that is used in later batch processing from the past attendee direct entry from interest profiler alert generation control **560**.

Registration information is also provided to exhibitors and sponsor clients **102** enabling them to seek follow-up sales with the attendee client **101**. This information transfer may or may not be made known to the attendee client **101**.

The cyber exhibit booths **615** program control and page displays lists of the cyber exhibit booths and allows the attendee client **101** to "visit" the booths. A registration check is made to assure attendee client **101** access to the booths; if not, branch control is provided back to the registration desk **610**. The cyber exhibit detail and booth control and page displays lists the cyber exhibit booths and allows the cyber attendee to "visit" the booths. Search by various options is provided. The search options include a search of only the cyber exhibit booths in the virtual convention venue databases **300** relationship-tied to the specific convention. Options include search by exhibitor name such as the "Nike®" exhibit booths at this convention, by subject search such as the "sporting goods" exhibit booths at this convention, or by key word(s) such as "ice hockey gloves" at this convention.

As noted before, the "exhibits" or "exhibit booths" used in the invention are made up of "panels" as illustrated in Figs. 10A-10J. The panels are the common Internet advertising ad banner sizes such as full banner, full banner with vertical navigation bar, half banner, square banner, vertical banner, button #1, button #2, and micro button. Each panel can also represent a major display venue - where each panel can bridge the attendee client **101** to various promotional page venues (e.g., the full exhibitor brochure, multiple and rotating digital photos of products, or video clips). The attendee client **101** can click on any and all panels.

Size (Pixels)	Size (Inches)	Type
468 x 60	6.50 x 0.83	Full Banner
392 x 72	5.44 x 1.00	Full Banner with Vertical Navigation Bar
234 x 60	3.25 x 0.83	Half Banner
125 x 125	1.74 x 1.74	Square Banner
120 x 90	1.67 x 1.25	Button #1
120 x 60	1.67 x 0.83	Button #2
88 x 31	1.22 x 0.43	Micro Button
120 x 240	1.67 x 3.33	Vertical Banner

Advertising industry standard ABC and BPA International audit measurement is tracked in the virtual convention venue databases **300** concerning attendee client **101** visits at the booth or click-throughs from the panels for later reporting to the exhibitor/sponsor client **103**, or for billing purposes. Fees and policies concerning the attendee client **101** visit measurement and billing of the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** can be set up by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

The cyber sessions **620** and cyber forums **625** program control and page displays list the cyber sessions or forums and allows the attendee client **101** to "join". A registration check is made to assure proper access, based on registration policies and fees set up by the meeting planner client **102**. These cyber sessions and forums are specific to the convention, and are associated with the respective convention in the database. The sessions and forums are set up or loaded into the invention virtual convention venue databases **300** by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800** further described below.

For the cyber sessions and forums, interactive processing or participation by the attendee client **101** is provided with a common join-the-forum Internet chat-room-

type control with "subject" word categories or specific subject areas, with or without time attendance schedules. Also, the interactive processing or participation by the attendee client **101** to join-the-session/forum common Internet video conferencing with specific subject areas and time attendance schedules can be provided. An example of "cyber forum" is "The Blame Excuse Defense" with Professor Alan Dershowitz hosted by the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", 8:00pm to 10:00pm EST. The attendee client 101 is invited to join in.

The sponsors list **630** program control and page displays lists the special sponsors of the convention. These sponsors are specific to the convention, and are related/tied in the virtual convention venue databases **300**. The sponsors can be set up or loaded by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

In the conventions industry, the sponsors are usually "higher up" than exhibitors with their underwriting activities of the convention. This usually means sponsors receive greater exposure than exhibitors and receive the best cyber exhibit booth size and location. Therefore, the cyber exhibit booths **615** display process would take the sponsor designation in the virtual convention venue databases **300** as priority control in terms of all booth list sequences. Further, in sponsors list **630**, special advertising with URL links would be provided in this page display area.

For medical or technical conventions, the call for papers **635** program control and page displays provides the attendee client **101** a process to submit a "technical paper" for consideration by the editorial professionals of the association which would be the meeting planner client **102**. The "paper", once placed in the virtual convention venue databases **300**, can be a wide arrange of common Internet electronic presentations including multimedia information such as video, movies, photographs, and audio.

Logging of the "technical paper" and transfer processing is provided to the appropriate editorial review professional, a specific meeting planner client **102**, of the association. The call for papers **635** program control parameter rules is set up in the invention by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

Subsequent to the call for papers **635** processing, the papers and proceedings presentations **640** program control and page displays provides the attendee client **101** a process to select and list "technical/professional papers" for review that have been accepted by the editorial professionals of the association, a special type of meeting planner client **102**. Further, the official proceedings of the convention are "posted" or placed in the papers presentations and proceedings database **380** by the meeting planner client **102** for subsequent releasing to the attendee client **101**.

The cyber broadcast schedule and events **645** program control and page displays list the Internet broadcasts and provides further procession for allowing the attendee client **101** to "sign up". A registration check is made to assure proper access, based on registration policies and fees set up by the meeting planner client **102**. These cyber broadcasts use common Internet broadcast technology, however the broadcasts are specific in the invention in terms of a tie or relationship to the specific convention in the virtual convention venue databases **300**. Fees and policies concerning the attendee client **101** participation or viewing the cyber broadcast can be set up by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

An example of the "cyber broadcast" is "The Blame Excuse Defense" with Professor Alan Dershowitz hosted by the "American Bar Association Annual Meeting", 8:00pm to 10:00pm EST. In this case, Professor Dershowitz presents a speech only program.

The sponsor opportunities 650 program control and page display links and branches the attendee client 101 to the exhibitor/sponsor client support - program instructions 900. The control is passed in the system with referral from the sending-specific convention including information provided by the attendee client 101 during the registration process. This process gives the attendee client 101, who may now automatically become an exhibitor/sponsor client 103, an opportunity "sign up" as an exhibitor or sponsor to the specific convention in the virtual convention venue databases 300.

Figs. 7A and 7B illustrate a sitemap flow diagram of venue-based conventions with cyber conventions with cyber exhibit booth display, and cyber sessions and forums - program instructions 700 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. In the above discussion of Fig. 5, the title of this programming area was simplified and shortened to "venue-with-cyber convention 700". The invention now allows the visitation by the attendee client 101 of a cyber-based convention that is available anytime before, during, or after a venue-based convention (e.g., Moscone Center in San Francisco). The attendee client 101 now has a wide array of specific convention information provided and activity simulated through the program instructions and the databases. It is important to again note that this programming control section, in terms of programming and displays, is only used IF there is joining or combinations of a venue-based conventions WITH cyber conventions. This provides all parties involved the ability to register and attend the venue-based convention AND/OR the cyber convention.

From the convention welcome page 701, the venue-with-cyber convention 700 program instructions provide a wide array of processing using the virtual convention venue databases 300. The convention in this programming control section is again specific and defined. "Dive down" or sub-processing within this section is limited to the specific

convention (e.g., "American Bar Association Annual Meeting on Litigation held at the Moscone Center in San Francisco) using this virtual convention venue, the attendee client 101 has several major selection choices with follow-up database query and page display processing including a convention welcome message 705, registration desk 710, exhibits 715 with display, sessions 720, forums list 725, sponsors list 730, membership 735, call for papers 740, papers and proceedings presentations 745, cyber broadcast schedule and events 750, and sponsor opportunities 755. Each of these programmed selection choices has special search and database lists, dive-down program flow control, web page display or follow-on processing capabilities as further described below.

The welcome message 705 program instructions displays from the virtual convention databases 300 the specific convention overview information such as and including a director message, welcome information, overall dates of the meeting, meeting theme, as well as venue-based convention information. The welcome message 705 logically expands to point 707 on Fig. 7B to depict the expanded role of the welcome message 705. The welcome message 705 program instructions displays from the virtual convention venue databases 300. The specific convention information would have already been set up or entered in the invention by the meeting planner client 102 through meeting planner client support - program instructions 800 (described below). Dive-down program flow control is provided to specialized convention information such as common web browser program "plug-ins & downloads" needed to assist in supporting the display and programming of the cyber convention, the cyber sessions or forums, cyber broadcast events, or cyber exhibit booth displays. Venue-based information programming on Fig. 7B includes general convention information 760, board and committee messages 765, venue-based exhibitor floor maps 770, venue-based session maps 780, and venue maps 785.

The general convention information 760 program instructions provides the attendee client 101 extensive content-type data from the virtual convention venue databases 300. This programming and content information and includes registration information and program link control, recommended dress for the venue-based convention, average temperatures at the venue-based destination, housing bureau involvement and program link control with URL links, hotel participants and accommodations with URL links, travel arrangements with URL links, CVB participants with URL links, rental car transportation with URL links, venue-based destination parking with URL links, and sponsors with URL links.

The board and committee messages 765 program instructions provide for special welcome and direction information for boards and committees of the association and organization involved in the convention.

The venue-based exhibitor floor maps 770 program instructions provide floor maps of the exhibitors (e.g., Moscone Center main floor with the layout and location of exhibitors). Exhibitor name search list processing is provided in the invention showing the location of a specific exhibitor booth on the floor.

The venue-based session maps 780 program instructions provide floor maps of the sessions and forums (e.g., Moscone Center "break out" rooms for the location of the sessions and forums). Session and forum name search list processing is provided showing the location of a specific session or forum in a break out room.

The venue maps 785 program instructions provide maps of the venue, such as the Moscone Center in San Francisco. Sponsors involved who are physically located around or outside the venue can provide location information; and, sponsor name or service type search list processing is provided showing the location of a specific sponsor (e.g., the Hyatt Hotel two blocks from the Moscone Center).

Returning to Fig. 7A, the registration desk 710 program instructions directs the attendee client 101 to register for services of the cyber OR venue-based convention. Based on registration policies and fee amounts contained in the convention venue databases 300 which are set up or loaded by the meeting planner client 102 in meeting planner client support - program instructions 800, the attendee client 101 follows the program flow control and web page display instructions. For example, cyber exhibit booth display 715 OR the venue-based center "attendance" may be "free" or the attendee client 101 can pay via a credit card or other Internet common payment approaches. Similarly, registration policies and fee amounts with program flow control can affect "attendance" at sessions 720, (in either cyber sessions or venue-based sessions, forums 625, in either cyber or venue-based sessions, or other convention areas as program controlled by the registration policies and fee amount fields.

During the registration desk 710 program control, the attendee client 101 also provides interest profile information that is used in later batch processing from the past attendee direct entry from interest profiler alert generation control 560.

The exhibits 715 program control and page displays directs the attendee client 101 to the cyber exhibit detail and booth control OR the venue-based exhibit detail and control. The exhibits 715 program control and page displays lists of the cyber exhibit booths and allows the attendee client 101 to "visit" the booths similar to the cyber exhibit booths 615 processing above. A registration check is made to assure attendee client 101 access to the booths, in the alternative, if not, branch control is provided back to the registration desk 610. The cyber exhibit detail and booth control and page displays lists the cyber exhibit booths and allows the attendee client 101 to "visit" the booths. Search by various options is provided. The search options include a search

of only the cyber exhibit booths in the virtual convention venue databases **300** relationship-tied to the specific convention. Options include search by exhibitor name such as the "Nike®" exhibit booths at this convention, by subject search such as the "sporting goods" exhibit booths at this convention, or by key word(s) such as "ice hockey gloves" at this convention.

However, in this exhibits **715** program control and page displays area, the venue-based exhibit detail is also displayed from the virtual convention venue databases **300**. This allows the attendee client **101** to search and list the various exhibitors at the venue-based convention such as the "sporting goods" exhibitors at the Moscone Center at the venue-based convention. Program link control is provided from the venue-based exhibit detail and control to the venue-based exhibitor floor maps **770**.

The sessions **720** and forums **725** program control and page displays list the cyber and venue-based sessions or forums and allows the attendee client **101** to "join". A registration check is made to assure proper access, based on registration policies and fees set up by the meeting planner client **102**. These cyber and venue-based sessions and forums are specific to the convention, and are related/tied in the database. The sessions and forums are set up or loaded into the invention virtual convention venue databases **300** by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800** further described below. The sessions **720** and forums **725** program control for the cyber sessions and forums is the same as described in the above cyber sessions **620** and cyber forums **625** program control and page displays. The venue-based sessions or forums detail and control processing allows the attendee client **101** to also search and list the various sessions or forums presented at the venue-based convention. Registration branch program control is provided.

The sponsors list 730 is similar to the above described sponsors list 630 program control and page displays lists of the special sponsors of the convention. These sponsors are specific to the convention, and are related/tied in the virtual convention venue databases 300. The sponsors are set up or loaded by the meeting planner client 102 in meeting planner client support-program instructions 800. The sponsors list 730 processing includes venue-based sponsor information and program processing which is link-depicted at 708 on Fig. 7B-linking to the general convention information 760 program control.

The membership 735 program control and page display directs the attendee client 101 to "join" the association that is holding the specific convention. A wide selection of association membership-type information from the virtual convention venue databases 300 is provided. Become a member 736 program control and processing is similar to the registration desk 610 program; links are provided. Membership fees and policies concerning the attendee client 101 joining the association is set up by the meeting planner client 102 in meeting planner client support - program instructions 800.

The call for papers 740 and subsequent papers and proceedings presentations 745 program control and page displays are identical to the processing described in detail above in call for papers 635 and papers and proceedings presentations 640. However, the "technical paper" presented by the professional, attendee client 101, can also be viewed by the editorial committee for potential presentation at the venue-based convention. Also, the "proceedings" of the venue-based convention can be "posted" by the meeting planner client 102.

The cyber broadcast schedule and events 750 program control is identical to the processing described in detail above in cyber broadcast schedule and events 645 and is depicted here to show the inclusion with the "venue-with-cyber convention 700".

The sponsor opportunities 755 program control is identical to the processing described in detail above in sponsor opportunities 650, and is depicted here to show the inclusion with the "venue-with-cyber convention 700".

Fig. 8 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the meeting planner client support-program instructions 800 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The system now allows the prospective meeting planner client 102 to review a sales demonstration of a fully loaded "showcase sample" virtual convention. The system then provides the meeting planner client 102 the dive-down program flow control to initially load and later change the control parameter rules and content information into the virtual convention venue databases 300 for each specific convention. The parameter rules and content information supports the "100% cyber-based convention 600", the "venue-with-cyber convention 700", and the fees and policies used in the exhibitor/sponsor client support - program instructions 900.

Similar to the meetings for professional work with physical convention centers (e.g., venue-based centers) in the convention industry, the meeting planner client 102 has significant control of specific "conventions" (e.g., standard conventions, events, conferences, trade shows and meetings) in the virtual convention venue invention. Further interpretation on meeting planners work can be obtained from Meeting Professionals International "MPI" located in Dallas, TX. The meeting planner client support - program instructions 800 in terms of the meeting planner client 102 was described in the Fig. 6 detail discussions above: welcome message 605, registration desk 610, cyber exhibit booths 615, cyber sessions 620, cyber forums 625, sponsors list 630, call for papers 635, papers and proceedings presentations 640, and cyber broadcast schedule and events 645. Further, the meeting planner client support-program instructions 800 in terms of the meeting planner client 102

was also described in the Figs. 7A and 7B detail discussions above: welcome message 705, registration desk 710, exhibits 715, sessions 720, forums 725, sponsors list 730, membership 735, call for papers 740, papers and proceedings presentations 745, cyber broadcast schedule and events 750, general convention information 760, board and committee messages 765, venue-based exhibitor floor maps 770, venue-based session maps 780, and venue maps 785.

The meeting planner site inspection 805 program instructions process provides controlled query of the virtual convention venue databases 300 and allows the prospective meeting planner client 102 to review a sales demonstration of fully loaded samples of virtual conventions. These samples include meetings and conventions from both the "100% cyber-based convention 600" and the "venue-with-cyber convention 700" program processes.

The meeting planner services 810 program instructions provides the meeting planner client 102 the dive-down program flow control to initially load and later change the control parameter rules and content information into the virtual convention venue databases 300 for each specific convention. The meeting planner services 810 program instructions address both the "100% cyber-based convention 600" and the "venue-with-cyber convention 700" control parameter rules and content information. A meeting planner welcome 815 program provides the various policies and fee options of the virtual convention venue processes. Next, a site inspection as described at point 805 above is provided if the prospect meeting planner client 102 missed such a "showcase" review of the invention.

The sign-up your association and meetings 825 program instructions provide all processing to initially load and later change the control parameter rules and content information into the virtual convention venue databases 300 for each specific convention. After a password is given by the webmaster, the meeting planner

client **102** can contract pursuant to, for example, an agreement between the website host organization and the meeting planner association or corporation) for services on the virtual convention venue invention. The meeting planner client **102** can then load all details and content. The details and content are requested through a series of submission forms and subsequent receipt by the program including:

- convention processing flow control parameters,
- convention content information,
- exhibitor/sponsor registration edit criteria parameters,
- exhibitor client booth criteria and control parameters,
- attendee registration edit criteria parameters,
- sessions and forums processing flow control parameters,
- sessions and forums content information,
- call for papers processing flow control parameters,
- paper presentation content information,
- meeting proceedings content information,
- cyber broadcast processing flow control parameters, and
- broadcast schedule and event content information.

The meeting planner can also load potential exhibitor and sponsor contacts for further sales efforts by the website host organization.

The paper for presentation and proceedings presentation control **830** program instructions provide all processing for meeting planner clients **102** who are assigned specific technical editor responsibilities (by the association) for the paper review and approval for presentation. This program area includes review of all papers that have been submitted by attendee clients **101**, post editor comments, and approval-marking the paper for

inclusion in through the paper presentations 640 and 745 program instructions. Further, the meeting planner client 102 can also "post" or load on the paper presentations and proceedings database 380 the "official" proceedings of the convention.

Fig. 9 illustrates a sitemap flow diagram of the exhibitor/sponsor client support - program instructions 900 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The exhibitor and sponsor services 905 program instructions now allow the prospective exhibitor/sponsor client 103 to review a sales demonstration of a fully loaded "showcase sample" of exhibitor booths. The system then provides the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 the dive-down program flow control to initially select and order the booth style, choose various decorator services, and then build the "panels", in Figs. 10A-10J using common Internet advertising ad banner sizes and later change, using information provided by exhibitor/sponsor client 103, the exhibit booths and sponsor level support in the virtual convention venue databases 300 for one or many conventions. "One or many" is used here in the invention to specify the capability of the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 to place an exhibit booth order across multiple conventions in the virtual convention venue databases 300. This is further described below.

The exhibitor/sponsor welcome 910 program control and page displays provide the various policies and fee options associated to the potential exhibitor and sponsors of the virtual convention venue processes. The information presented to the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 in this programming area includes the policies and fees, such as sponsor level "packages", set forth in the virtual convention venue databases 300 for each selected meeting and convention.

The demonstration of sample exhibitor booths 915 program instructions presents a fully loaded "showcase sample" of exhibitor booths released to an

exhibitor/sponsor on request. The standard styles illustrated in Figs 10A-10J are demonstrated as well as other styles used by exhibitors in the past.

The sign-up your company **920** program instructions provide all the form pages necessary for the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** to sign-up or register for specific conventions. Available here is an agreement between the website host organization representing the meeting planner association or corporation, and the exhibitor/sponsor for services on the virtual convention venue invention. Also, venue-based registration or sign-up processing is provided. All information is written in the virtual convention venue databases **300**.

The booth decorator services **925** program instructions provide the capabilities to order the website host organization to assist with the technical aspects of the exhibitor booth. Decorator services is used here similar to the convention industry. The website host organization can offer a wide array of services such as digital photography, scanning, signage and other communication-type services to assist in assuring the exhibitor booth meets the needs of the exhibitor/sponsor client **103**.

The exhibitor and sponsor opportunities **930** program instructions includes branch link control of the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** to meetings search by various criteria, place exhibit order dive-down process, or place sponsor orders.

The meetings search by various criteria **935** program instructions provide the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** the ability to "select" a specific convention OR "select" across multiple conventions. For example, exhibitor/sponsor "Pepsi-Cola® Company" may want to exhibit and sponsor across all "sports" related conventions based upon terms in a master purchase agreement. Reiterating, a convention in the invention is defined as a standard convention, event, conference, trade show or meeting held

at the virtual convention venue in terms of the programs and databases described herein.

The place exhibit orders 940 program instructions includes a "building process" of the exhibit booth and permits the exhibitor sponsor to provide booth design/content information. Programming steps include pick-a-booth, pick-a-show, pick-a-content-level, and pricing calculator with payment processing. The pricing of the exhibit booths is based on all of these criteria. As an example, a 25 page brochure behind one button on a cyber exhibit booth may be more expensive than one simple digital picture which requires less storage, because pricing may be content-based.

The place sponsor orders 950 program instructions provide the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 the ability to order and contract for special exposure services during the virtual convention venue processes. In the conventions industry, the sponsors are usually "higher up" than exhibitors with their underwriting activities of the convention. This usually means sponsors receive greater exposure than the exhibitors and receive the best cyber exhibit booth size, package deals, preferred locations, etc. This process area includes the various option controls, rotating welcome ad banners, session introduction advertising, and special recognition.

Figs. 10A-10J illustrate 10 sample exhibit booth displays used in screen views and made from common Internet advertising ad banner sizes in accordance with this invention. The "exhibits" or "exhibit booths" used in the invention are made up of "panels" and arranged to appear similar to physical display booths used in the convention industry. The panels are the common Internet advertising ad banner sizes including full banner, full banner with vertical navigation bar, half banner, square banner, vertical banner, button #1, button #2, and micro button. Each panel can also represent a major display venue, where each panel can bridge the attendee client 101 to various

promotional page venues such as the full exhibitor brochure, multiple and rotating digital photos of products, or video clips.

The attendee client **101** can click on any and all panels. Registration information is also provided to exhibitors and sponsor clients **103** enabling them to seek follow-up sales with the attendee client **101**. This information may or may not be made known to the attendee client **101**.

Because the common Internet advertising ad banner sizes are used, it is important to note that an open-ended number of booth styles can be made up. Also, advertising industry standard ABC and BPA International audit measurement is tracked in the virtual convention venue databases **300** concerning attendee client **101** visits at the booth or click-throughs from the panels for later reporting to the exhibitor/sponsor client **103**, or for billing purposes. Fees and policies concerning the attendee client **101** visit measurement and billing of the exhibitor/sponsor client **103** can be set up by the meeting planner client **102** in meeting planner client support - program instructions **800**.

Conclusion

The description of the invention set forth herein is illustrative, and does not limit the scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims. Variations and modifications of the embodiments disclosed herein are possible. For example, various web browser computer or "information appliance" types, various web browser software programs, various real-time communications protocols, various relational database systems, and various website programming languages may be used. Also, the programming method steps set forth are presented to the reader from a linear or sequential-explanation viewpoint for best understanding; in the invention the steps are quasi-reentrant (e.g., good website application programs are written to "start" almost anywhere). Finally, the various

convention content and control parameter fields can have an unlimited number of programmer definitions and are also not meant to be limited. These and other variations and modifications of the embodiments disclosed herein may be made without departing from the spirit of the invention and from the scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for conducting at least one convention, by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client comprising the steps of:

a. receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions;

b. receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions; and

c. releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

2. The method according to claim 1 wherein the at least one meeting planner client is a plurality of meeting planner clients.

3. The method according to claim 1 wherein the at least one attendee client is a plurality of attendee clients.

4. The method according to claim 1 wherein the convention content information is cyber-based.

5. The method according to claim 1 wherein the convention content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

6. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of storing in a relational database cross-referencing fields from the meeting planner client to allow for the holding of an unlimited number of conventions.

7. The method according to claim 1 further comprising, prior to step b), the steps of receiving at the central website a search request from the attendee client for certain convention content information and releasing to the attendee client information satisfying the search request.

8. The method according to claim 1 further comprising, prior to step c), the steps of receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the convention.

9. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of using attendee client information to alert attendee clients of future conventions that may be of interest to them.

10. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website, from at least one exhibitor client, convention search, selection and registration information for at least one convention.

11. The method according to claim 10 wherein the at least one exhibitor client is a plurality of exhibitor clients.

12. The method according to claim 10 further comprising the step of storing cross-referencing fields from the convention content information in a relational database to allow an unlimited number of exhibitor clients.

13. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the meeting planner client session content information.

14. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the steps of receiving at the central website a request for certain client session content information from the attendee client for and releasing to the attendee client information satisfying the search request.

15. The method according to claim 14 wherein the session content information is cyber-based.

16. The method according to claim 14 wherein the session content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

17. The method according to claim 14 further comprising the step of providing attendee client participation in the session.

18. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website a search request from the attendee client for session information and releasing to the attendee client such information.

19. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the session.

20. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from an exhibitor client exhibit content information including exhibit booth design and content.

21. The method according to claim 20 wherein the exhibit content information is cyber-based.

22. The method according to claim 20 wherein the exhibit content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

23. The method according to claim 20 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the attendee client an exhibit booth selection.

24. The method according to claim 23 further comprising the step of releasing to the attendee client exhibit booth design and content.

25. The method according to claim 23 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the exhibit booth selection.

26. The method according to claim 20 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the attendee client a search request for certain exhibit booth design and content and releasing to the attendee client information satisfying the search.

27. The method according to claim 20 wherein the at least one exhibitor client is a plurality of exhibitor clients.

28. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the meeting planner paper presentation content information.

29. The method according to claim 28 wherein the paper presentation content information is cyber-based.

30. The method according to claim 28 wherein the paper presentation content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

31. The method according to claim 28 further comprising the step of releasing to the attendee client paper presentation content information.

32. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the meeting planner meeting proceedings content information.

33. The method according to claim 32 wherein the meeting proceedings content information is cyber-based.

34. The method according to claim 32 wherein the meeting proceedings content information is one of either cyber-based or venue-based.

35. The method according to claim 32 further comprising the step of releasing to the attendee client meeting proceedings content information.

36. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving at the central website from the meeting planner cyber broadcast content information.

37. The method according to claim 36 further comprising the step of releasing to the attendee client cyber broadcast content information.

38. The method according to claim 1 wherein a plurality of conventions are facilitated from the central website.

39. A method for conducting at least one convention, by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client comprising the steps of:

a) receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions;

b) receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions;

c) receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the convention; and

d) releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

40. A system for conducting at least one convention, by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client comprising:

a. means for receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and means for electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions;

b. means for receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions; and

c. means for releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

41. The system according to claim 40 further comprising means for receiving at the central website, from at least one exhibitor client, convention search, selection and registration information for at least one convention.

42. The system according to claim 40 further comprising means for receiving at the central website from an exhibitor client exhibit content information including exhibit booth design and content.

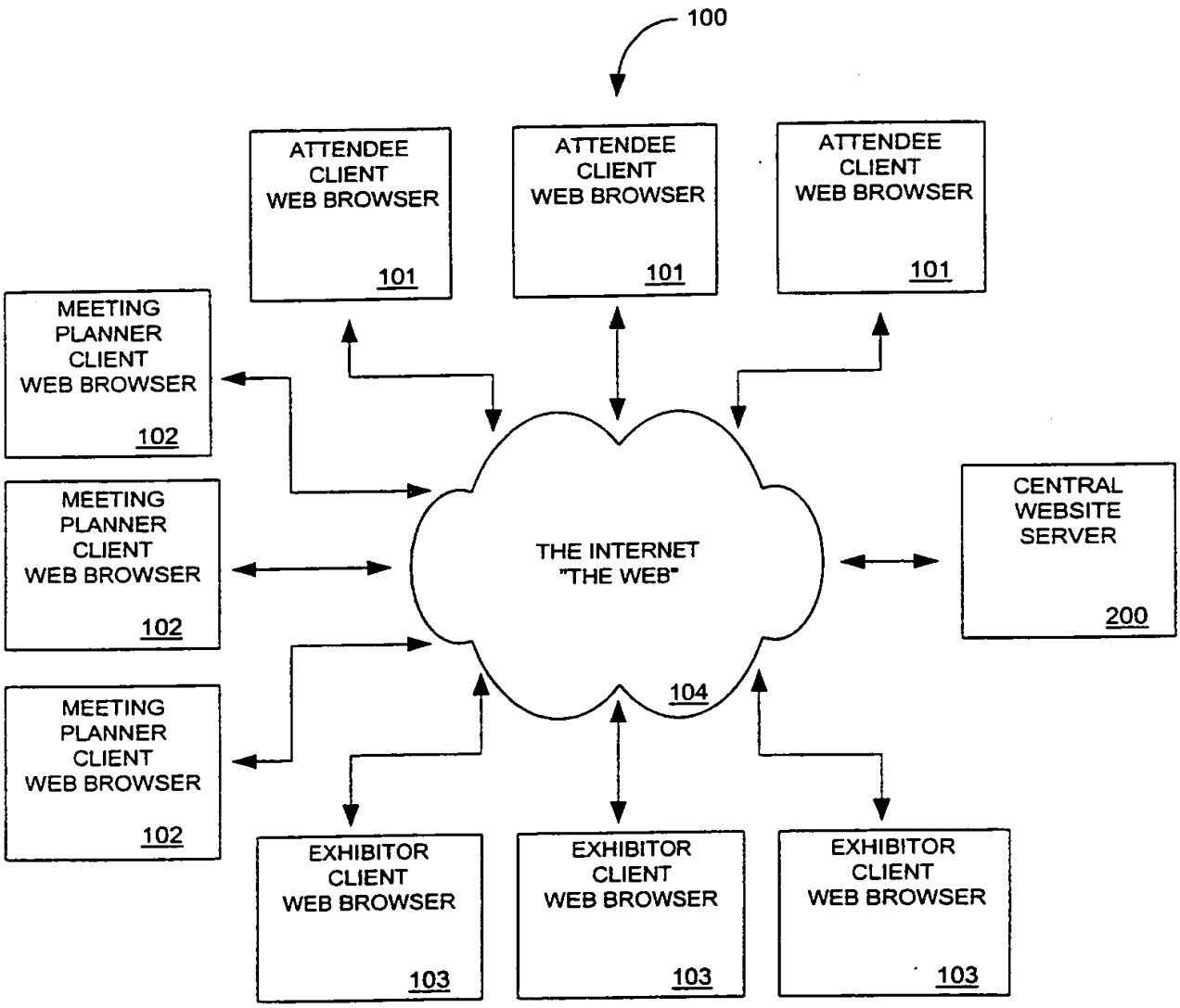

100
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER 101
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER 101
ATTENDEE CLIENT WEB BROWSER 101
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER 102
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER 102
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT WEB BROWSER 102
THE INTERNET "THE WEB" 104
CENTRAL WEBSITE SERVER 200
EXHIBITOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER 103
EXHIBITOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER 103
EXHIBITOR CLIENT WEB BROWSER 103

FIGURE 1

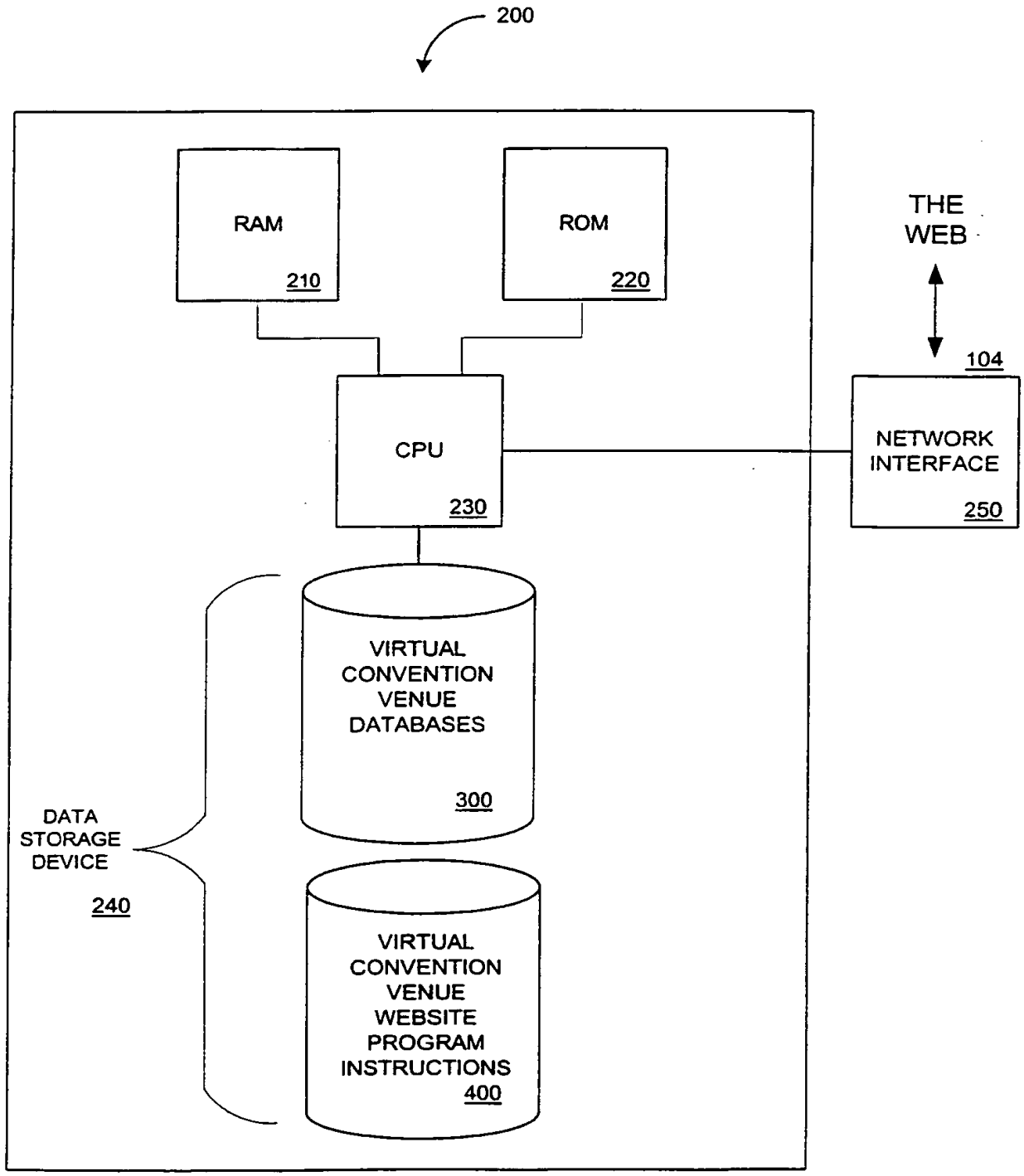

200
RAM
210
ROM
220
THE WEB
104
CPU
230
NETWORK INTERFACE
250
VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE DATABASES
300
DATA STORAGE DEVICE
240
VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE WEBSITE PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
400

FIGURE 2

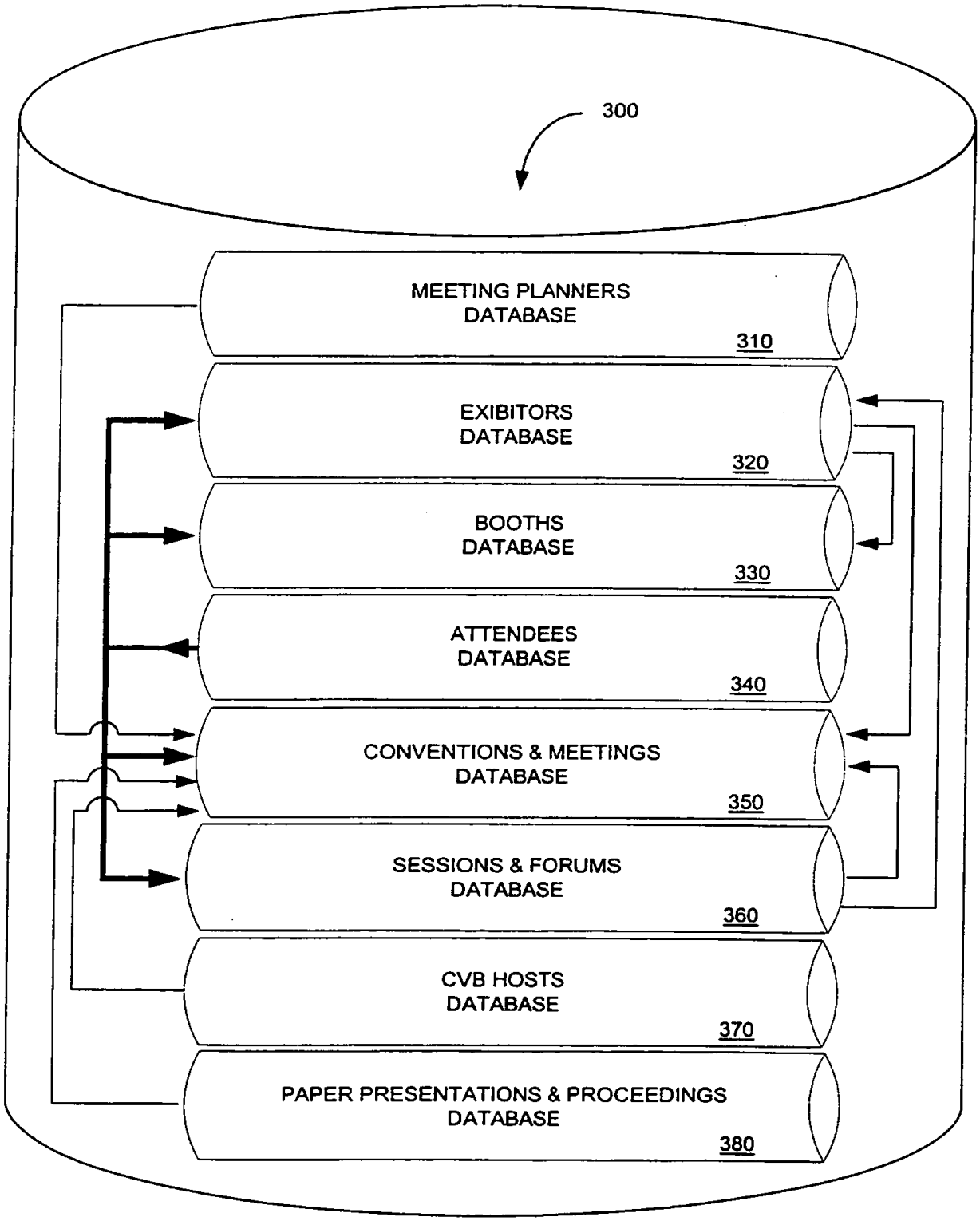

300
MEETING PLANNERS DATABASE
310
EXIBITORS DATABASE
320
BOOTHS DATABASE
330
ATTENDEES DATABASE
340
CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS DATABASE
350
SESSIONS & FORUMS DATABASE
360
CVB HOSTS DATABASE
370
PAPER PRESENTATIONS & PROCEEDINGS DATABASE
380

FIGURE 3

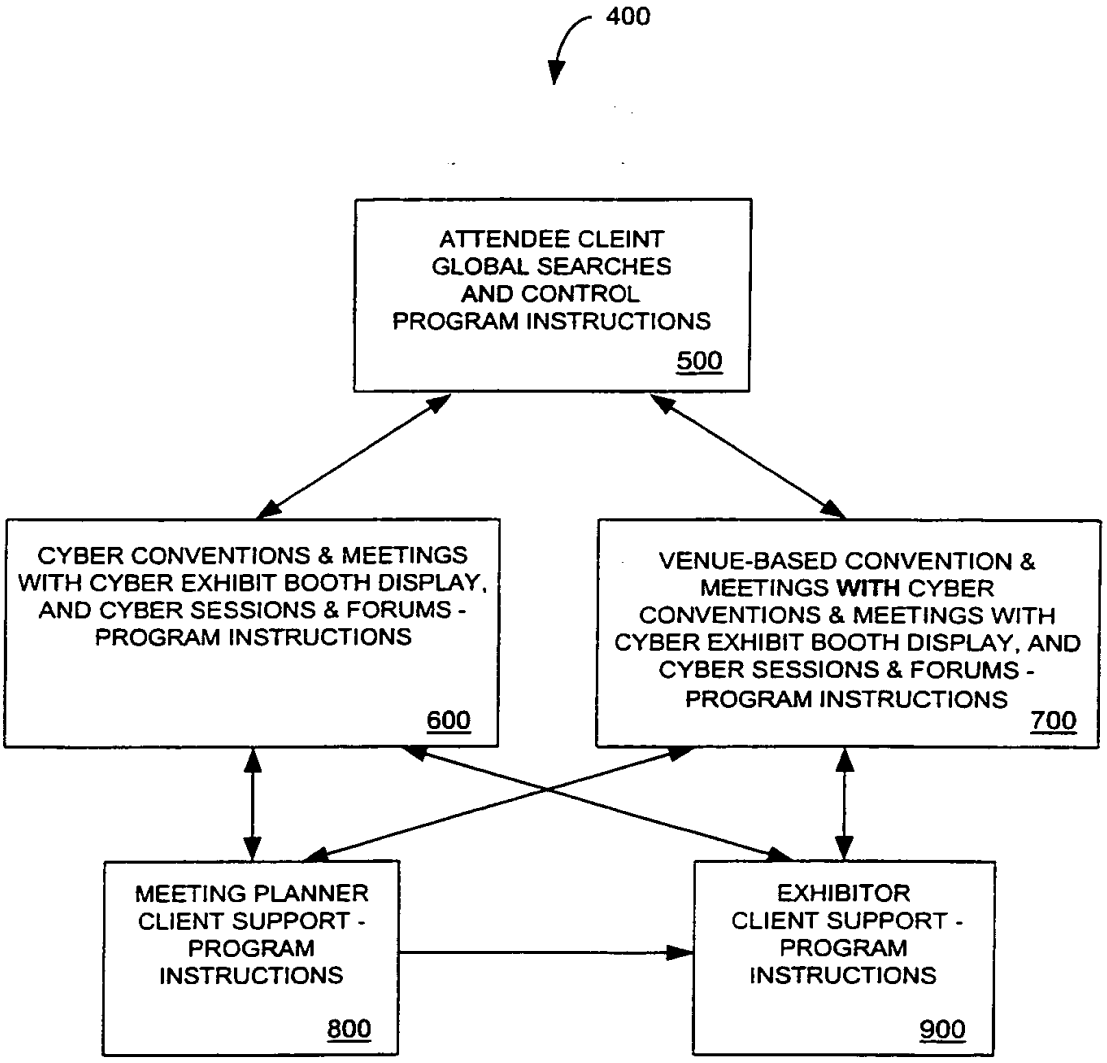

400
ATTENDEE CLEINT GLOBAL SEARCHES AND CONTROL PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
500
CYBER CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS WITH CYBER EXHIBIT BOOTH DISPLAY, AND CYBER SESSIONS & FORUMS - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
600
VENUE-BASED CONVENTION & MEETINGS WITH CYBER CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS WITH CYBER EXHIBIT BOOTH DISPLAY, AND CYBER SESSIONS & FORUMS - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
700
MEETING PLANNER CLIENT SUPPORT - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
800
EXHIBITOR CLIENT SUPPORT - PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS
900

FIGURE 4

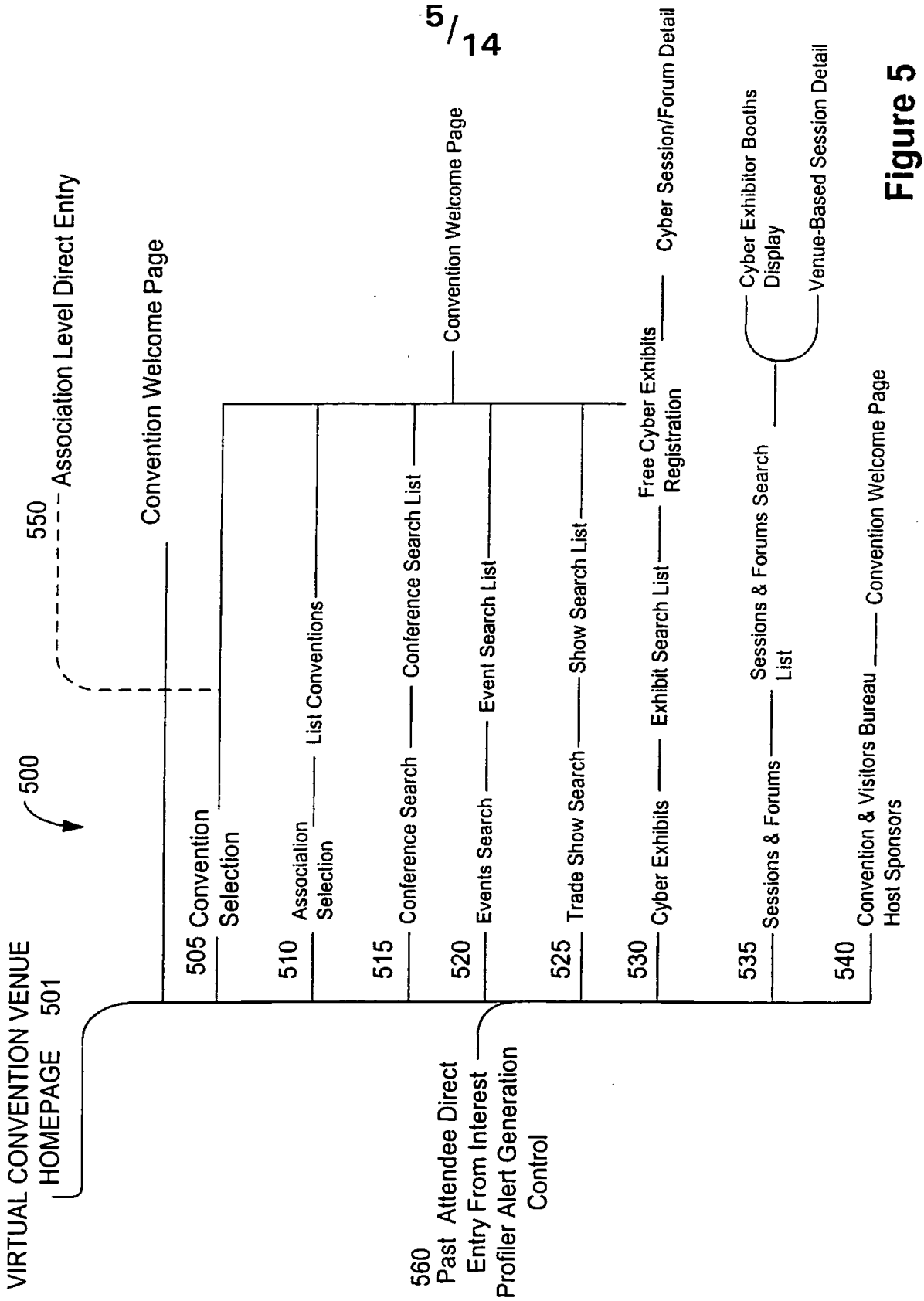

VIRTUAL CONVENTION VENUE HOMEPAGE 501
500
550
Association Level Direct Entry
Convention Welcome Page
505 Convention Selection
510 Association Selection
List Conventions
515 Conference Search
Conference Search List
520 Events Search
Event Search List
525 Trade Show Search
Show Search List
530 Cyber Exhibits
Exhibit Search List
Free Cyber Exhibits Registration
Cyber Session/Forum Detail
535 Sessions & Forums
Sessions & Forums Search List
Cyber Exhibitor Booths Display
Venue-Based Session Detail
540 Convention & Visitors Bureau Host Sponsors
Convention Welcome Page
Convention Welcome Page
560 Past Attendee Direct Entry From Interest Profiler Alert Generation Control

Figure 5

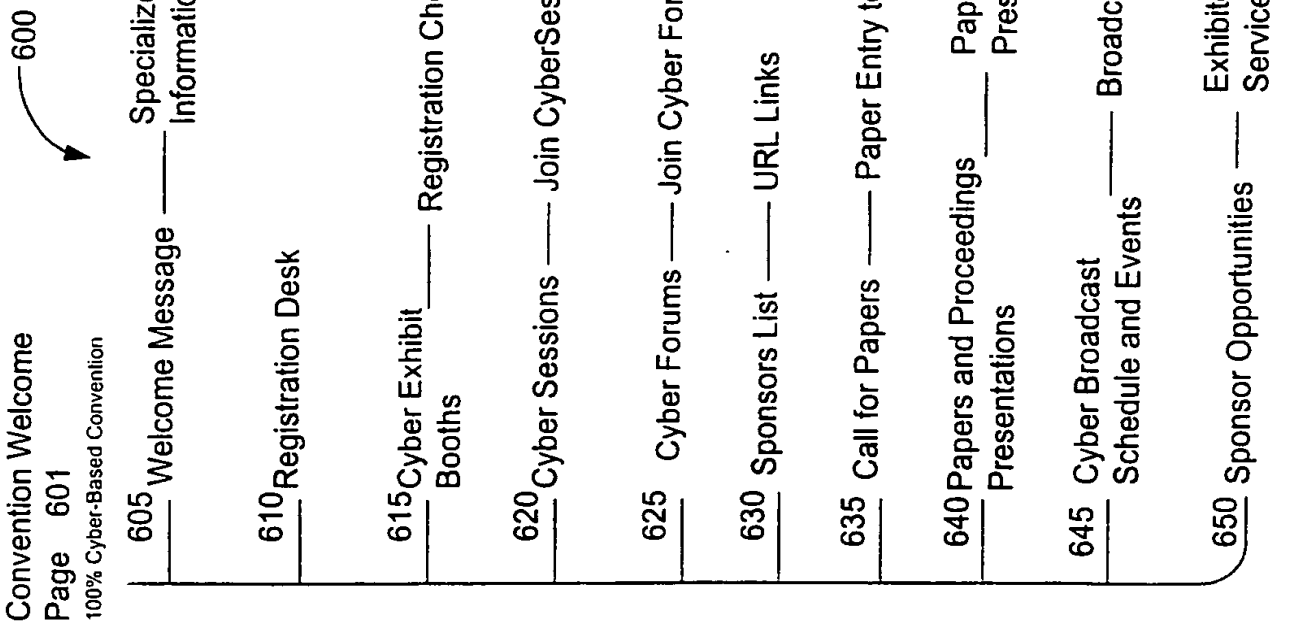

Convention Welcome Page 601
100% Cyber-Based Convention
600
605 Welcome Message
Specialized Convention Information
Plug-in's & Downloads
610 Registration Desk
615 Cyber Exhibit Booths
Registration Check
Cyber/Exhibit Booth Display
620 Cyber Sessions
Join CyberSession
625 Cyber Forums
Join Cyber Forum
630 Sponsors List
URL Links
635 Call for Papers
Paper Entry to Editor Process
640 Papers and Proceedings Presentations
Papers and Proceedings Presentation Detail
645 Cyber Broadcast Schedule and Events
Broadcast Services
650 Sponsor Opportunities
Exhibitor & Sponsors Services

Figure 6

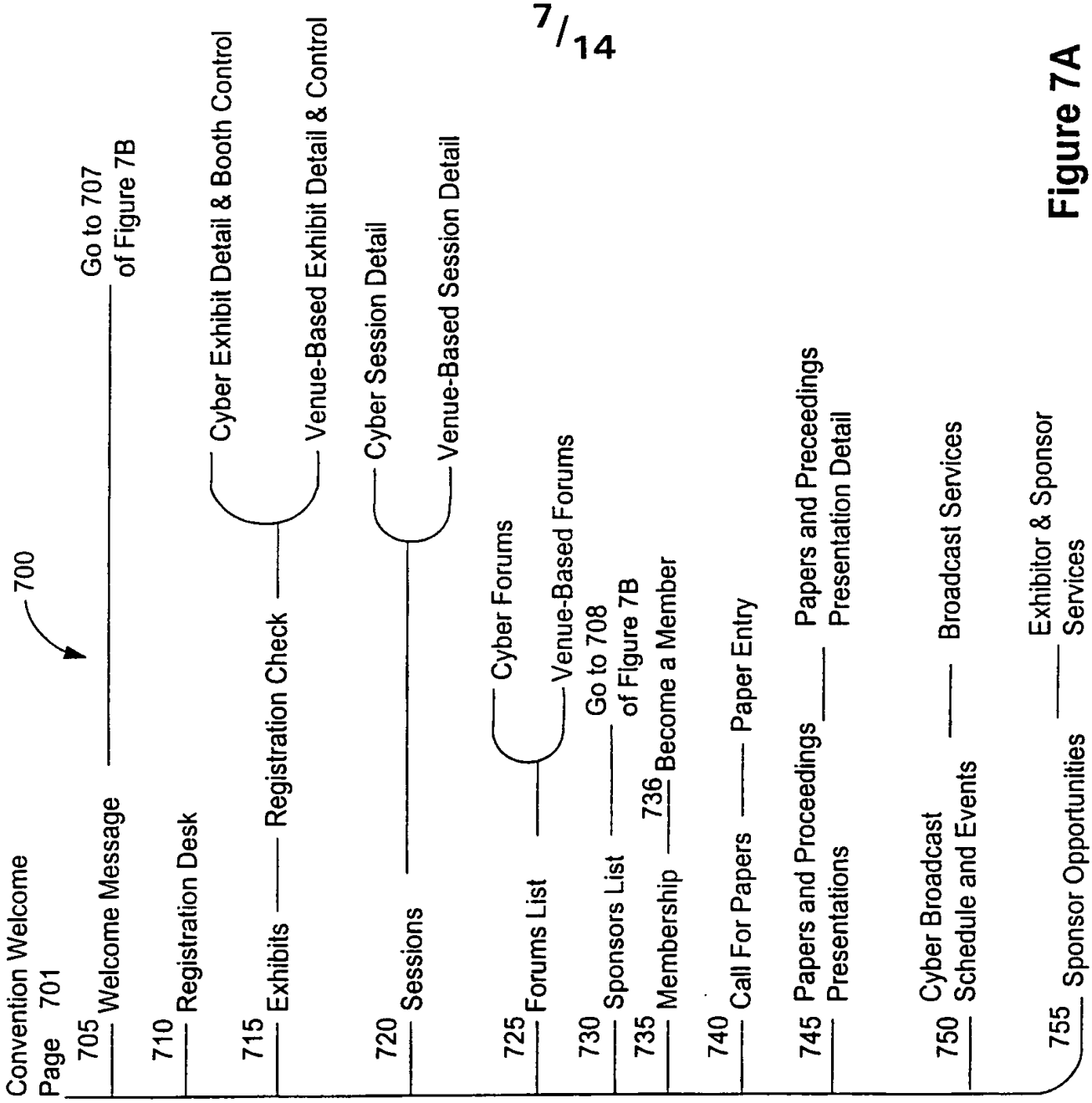

Convention Welcome Page 701
700
705 Welcome Message
Go to 707 of Figure 7B
710 Registration Desk
715 Exhibits
Registration Check
Cyber Exhibit Detail & Booth Control
Venue-Based Exhibit Detail & Control
720 Sessions
Cyber Session Detail
Venue-Based Session Detail
725 Forums List
Cyber Forums
Venue-Based Forums
730 Sponsors List
Go to 708 of Figure 7B
735 Membership
736 Become a Member
740 Call For Papers
Paper Entry
745 Papers and Proceedings Presentations
Papers and Preceedings Presentation Detail
750 Cyber Broadcast Schedule and Events
Broadcast Services
755 Sponsor Opportunities
Exhibitor & Sponsor Services

Figure 7A

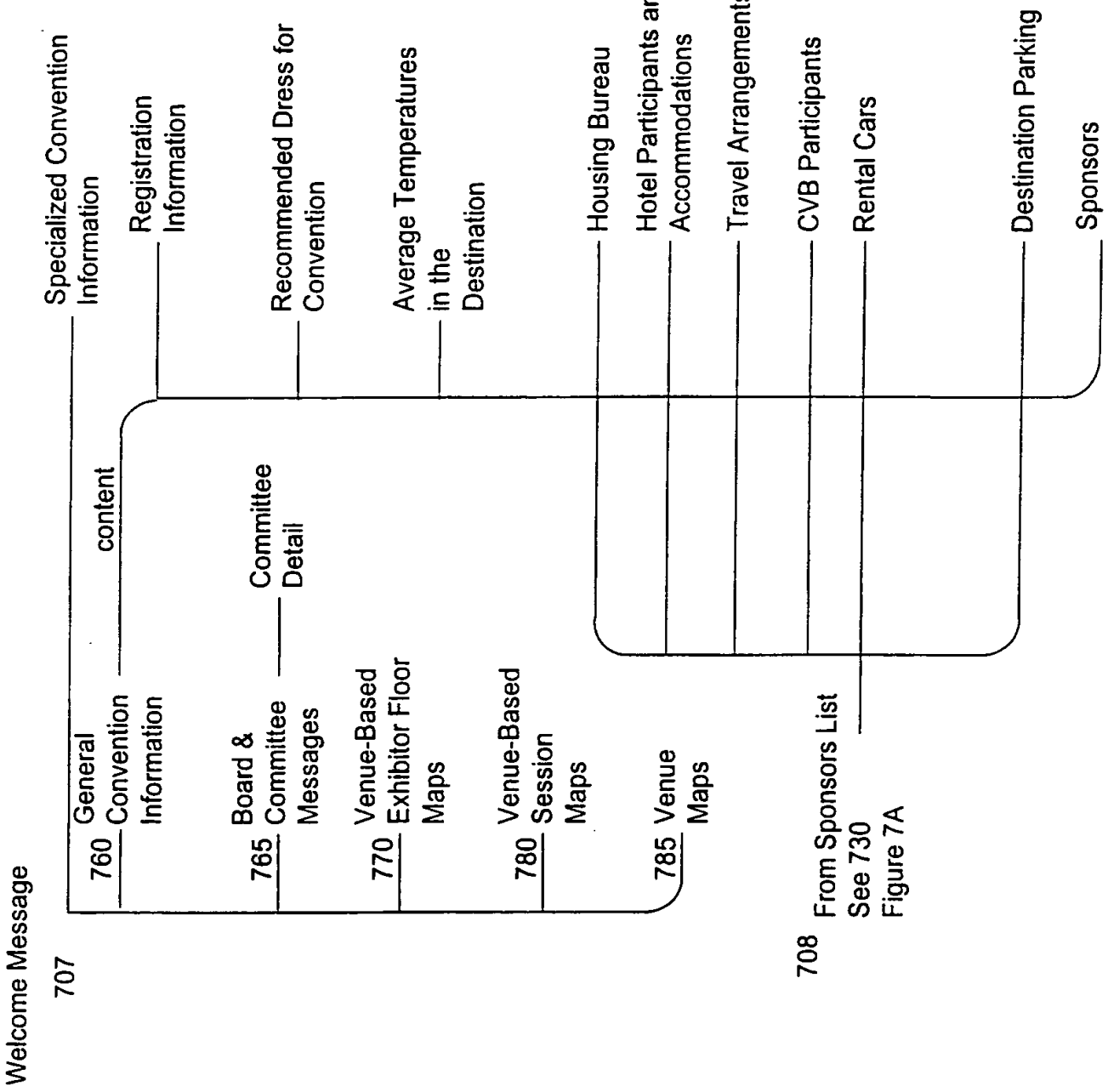

Welcome Message
707
760 General Convention Information
765 Board & Committee Messages
770 Venue-Based Exhibitor Floor Maps
780 Venue-Based Session Maps
785 Venue Maps
708 From Sponsors List See 730 Figure 7A
Specialized Convention Information
Registration Information
Recommended Dress for Convention
Average Temperatures in the Destination
Committee Detail
content
Housing Bureau
Hotel Participants and Accommodations
Travel Arrangements
CVB Participants
Rental Cars
Destination Parking
Sponsors

Figure 7B

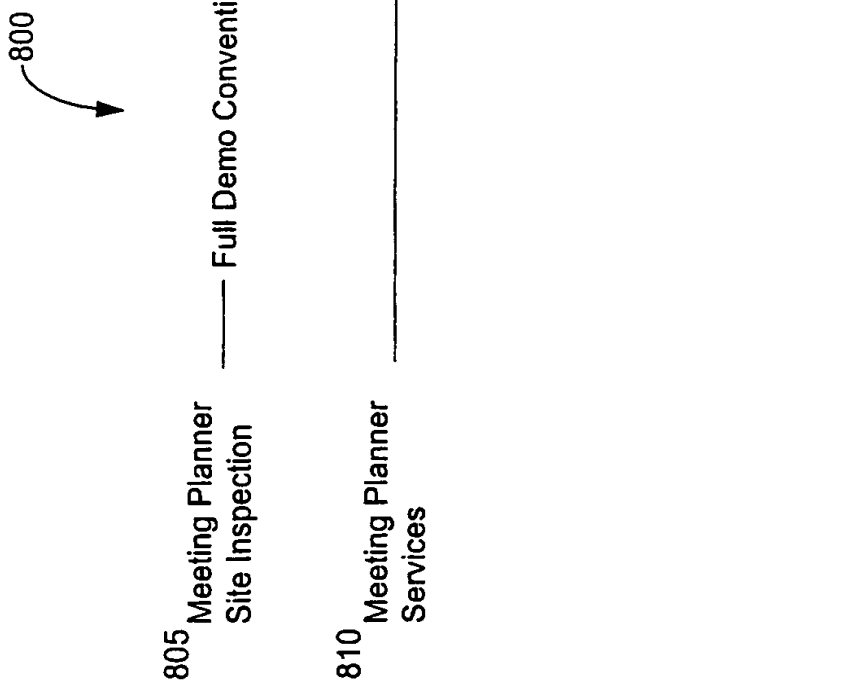

800
Full Demo Convention
815 Meeting Planner Welcome
Meeting Planner Site Inspection
Sign-Up Your Association and Meetings (Password)
825
830 Paper for Presentation and Proceedings Presentation Control
805 Meeting Planner Site Inspection
810 Meeting Planner Services

Figure 8

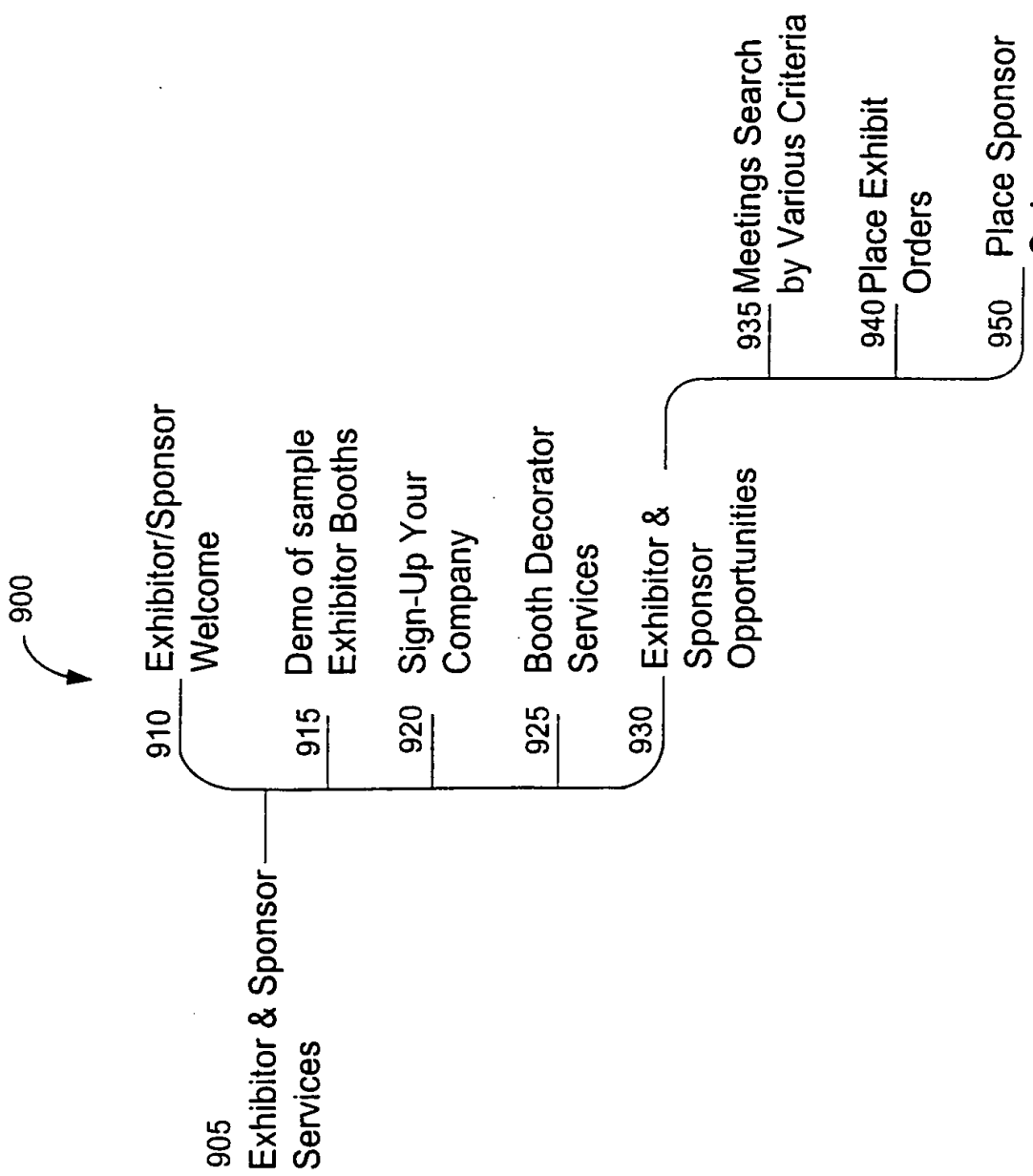

900
905 Exhibitor & Sponsor Services
910 Exhibitor/Sponsor Welcome
915 Demo of sample Exhibitor Booths
920 Sign-Up Your Company
925 Booth Decorator Services
930 Exhibitor & Sponsor Opportunities
935 Meetings Search by Various Criteria
940 Place Exhibit Orders
950 Place Sponsor Orders

Figure 9

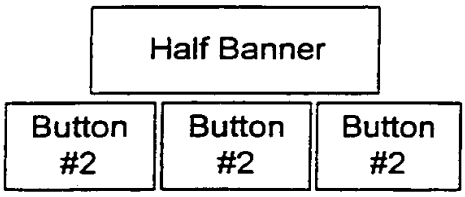


FIGURE 10A

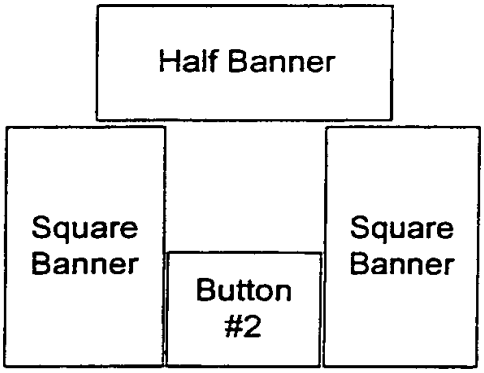


FIGURE 10B

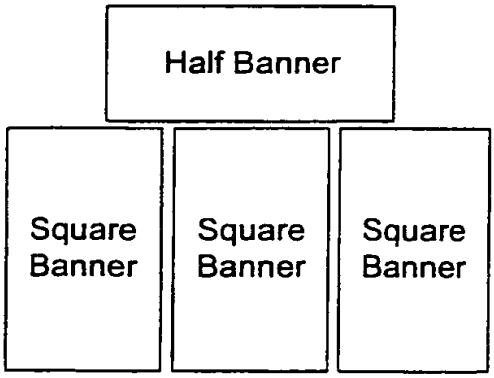


FIGURE 10C

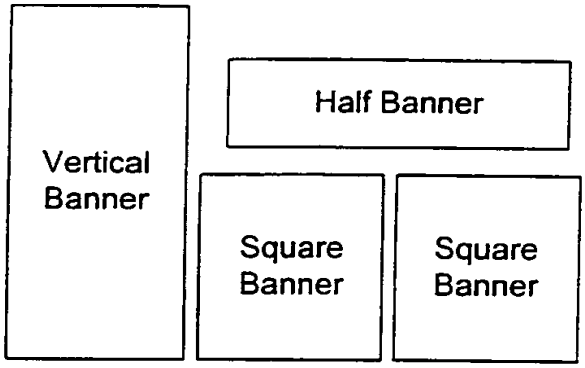


FIGURE 10D

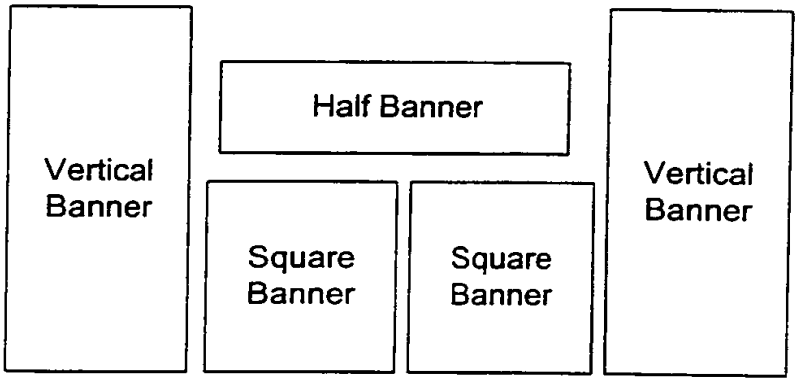


FIGURE 10E

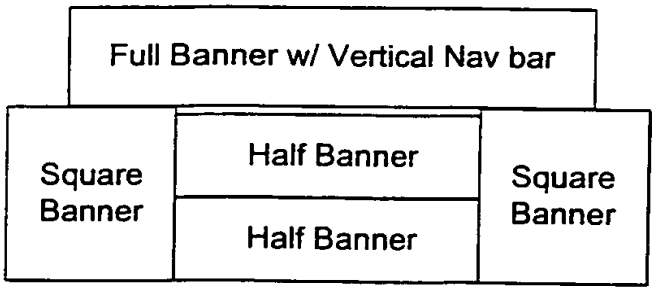


FIGURE 10F

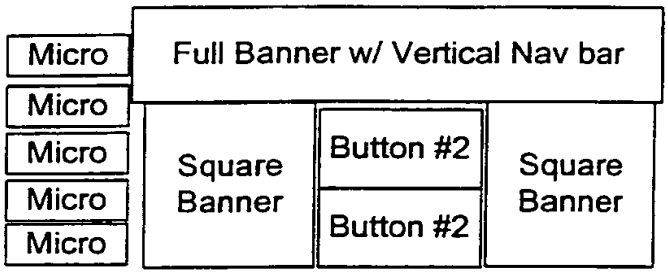


FIGURE 10G

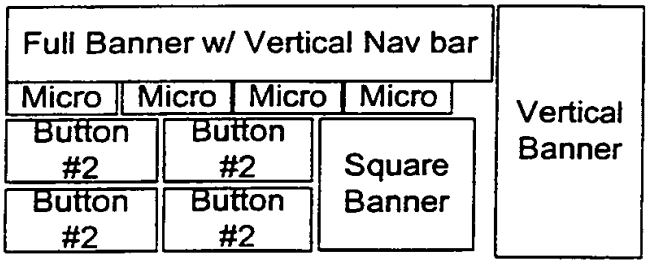


FIGURE 10H

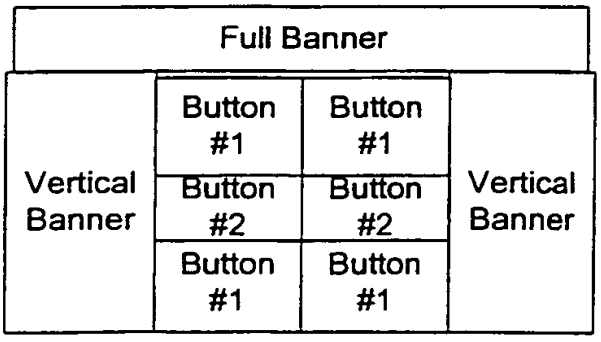


FIGURE 10I

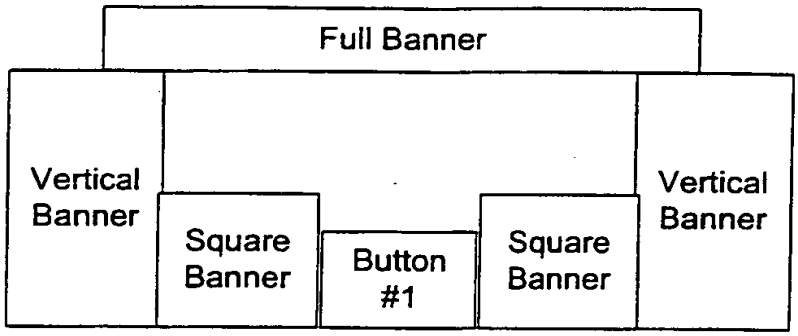

Full Banner
Vertical Banner
Square Banner
Button #1
Square Banner
Vertical Banner

FIGURE 10J

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US99/31285

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) :G06F 15/00, 15/16
US CL :709/203, 204, 205

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 709/203, 204, 205

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

IEEE

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EAST

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5,855,006 A (HUEMOELLER et al) 29 December 1998, col. 1, line 66 - col. 3, line 14 and col. 8, line 63 - col. 10, line 29.	1-42
Y,P	US 5,911,045 A (LEYBA et al) 08 June 1999, col. 2, line 27 - col. 3, line 24.	1-42
Y,P	US 5,963,913 A (HENNEUSE et al) 05 October 1999, col. 2, line 46 - col. 3, line 26 and col. 4, line 58 - col. 5, line 38.	1-42
A	US 5,491,743 A (SHIIO et al) 13 February 1996, see entire document.	1-42

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

*	Special categories of cited documents:	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E"	earlier document published on or after the international filing date	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search
23 APRIL 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report
11 MAY 2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US
Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Box PCT
Washington, D.C. 20231
Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230

Authorized officer
ZARNI MAUNG
Telephone No. 703-305-9600

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1998) *